



CfSC

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for August 2024



ANALYSIS OF COST OF LIVING CHANGES BETWEEN JULY AND AUGUST 2024

The analysis of the cost of living reports for July and August 2024 indicates several notable changes in prices for key commodities across different cities in Malawi, which have significantly impacted the overall cost of living. The cost of living has slightly increased from K516, 377 in July to K519, 763 in August, representing an increase of 0.7%.

*Centre for Reflection,
Research and Action on
Issues of Social Concern in
the Light of the Gospel and
the Church's Social
Teaching*

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Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024						
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS			
Maize	39,750	79,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	38,750	77,500	
Milling (Including Grinding)	775	10,850	Protex	1,363	13,630	
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,138	26,483	Boom	1,325	10,600	
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	17,683	17,683	Clere Body Lotion	1,856	3,712	
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	14,925	11,940	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,663	5,326	
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	16,367	16,367	
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	10,538	10,538	
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	275	13,200	Housing (3 bedroom)	81,961	81,961	
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	536	12,060		Sub-Total	219,634	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,385	20,775	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		539,698	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,422	4,977	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	975	14,625	Education			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,844	14,532	Secondary (fees) per year			58,500
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,538	30,760	Primary (GPF) per year			3,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,438	19,504	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year			24,465
Kitchen Salt	1,063	1,063	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year			40,685
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term			21,958
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	507	8,112		Sub-Total	148,608	
	Sub-Total	320,064		Sub-Total	148,608	

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024						
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS			
Maize	45,429	90,858	Charcoal (50 kgs)	19,143	38,286	
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,743	17,430	
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,000	25,600	Boom	1,443	11,544	
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	10,000	10,000	Clere Body Lotion	1,829	3,658	
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	10,000	8,000	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,500	7,000	
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	17,275	17,275	
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,500	26,000	Running Water (meter)	15,636	15,636	
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	72,507	72,507	
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	771	17,348		Sub-Total	183,336	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,243	18,645	Zomba Total Basic Needs		511,472	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	871	3,049	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	Education			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,512	13,536	Secondary (fees) per year			81,827
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,586	31,720	Primary (GPF) per year			9,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,486	19,888	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year			53,209
Kitchen Salt	1,029	1,029	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year			57,069
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	151	6,040	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term			18,714
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	814	13,024		Sub-Total	219,818	
	Sub-Total	328,136		Sub-Total	219,818	

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024						
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS			
Maize	43,929	87,858	Charcoal (50 kgs)	45,000	90,000	
Milling (Including Grinding)	400	5,600	Protex	1,321	13,210	
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,814	24,410	Boom	1,307	10,456	
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	20,571	20,571	Clere Body Lotion	1,721	3,442	
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	23,929	19,143	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,543	5,086	
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	26,000	20,800	Electricity	19,985	19,985	
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	4,714	18,856	Running Water (meter)	18,424	18,424	
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	70,955	70,955	
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	643	14,468	Sub-Total	231,558		
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,771	26,565	Blantyre Total Basic Needs	586,038		
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,614	5,649				
C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS						
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	979	14,685	Education			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,314	12,942	Secondary (fees) per year			37,732
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Primary (GPF) per year			5,451
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,443	19,544	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year			59,375
Kitchen Salt	814	814	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year			49,011
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	100	4,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term			21,904
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	886	14,176	Sub-Total	173,472		
Sub-Total			354,480			

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024						
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS			
Maize	33,333	66,666	Charcoal (50 kgs)	19,233	38,466	
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,400	33,600	Protex	2,308	23,080	
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,492	15,949	Boom	842	6,736	
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	11,000	11,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000	
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	26,833	21,466	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,488	1,066	
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	5,000	4,000	Electricity	7,964	7,964	
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	7,000	28,000	Running Water (meter)	6,904	6,904	
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	290	13,920	Housing (3 bedroom)	39,777	39,777	
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,150	25,875	Sub-Total	128,993		
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,522	37,830	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs	502,176		
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,355	8,243				
C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS						
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000	Education			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,750	14,250	Secondary (fees) per year			60,000
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,783	35,660	Primary (GPF) per year			4,580
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,583	20,664	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year			57,000
Kitchen Salt	2,220	2,220	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year			46,900
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term			18,770
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	365	5,840	Sub-Total	281,049		
Sub-Total			373,183			

Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	43,000	86,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	15,333	30,666
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	2,000	20,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,400	21,760	Boom	1,200	9,600
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	19,667	19,667	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	23,333	18,666	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,000	1,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	27,333	21,866	Electricity	9,521	9,521
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	9,474	9,474
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	42,944	42,944
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,533	34,493	Sub-Total		128,805
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,700	25,500	Mangochi Total Basic Needs	530,023	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,933	10,266			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,200	12,600	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year	69,363	
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,600	20,800	Primary (GPF) per year	4,627	
Kitchen Salt	1,000	1,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	57,713	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	53,708	
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,200	19,200	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	36,047	
Sub-Total	401,218		Sub-Total	221,458	

Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for August 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	30,000	60,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	18,750	37,500
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	1,225	12,250
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,098	8,784
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	15,000	15,000	Clere Body Lotion	3,825	7,650
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,850	5,700
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	16,000	12,800	Electricity	5,953	5,953
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	7,838	7,838
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	32,958	32,958
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	800	18,000	Sub-Total		118,633
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,650	39,750	Karonga Total Basic Needs	449,172	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,750	9,625			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,250	18,750	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,048	15,144	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year	91,998	
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,650	21,200	Primary (GPF) per year	7,488	
Kitchen Salt	390	390	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	56,277	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	75,278	
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,000	16,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	22,153	
Sub-Total	330,539		Sub-Total	253,194	

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	320,064	219,634	539,698
Zomba	328,136	183,336	511,472
Blantyre	354,480	231,558	586,038
Mzuzu	373,183	128,993	502,176
Mangochi	401,218	128,805	530,023
Karonga	330,539	118,633	449,172

Graph showing cost of living per district



Note: Total Basic Needs is calculated from Total Food Items + Total Non Food Items

NOTABLE CHANGES IN THE COST OF LIVING BETWEEN JULY AND AUGUST 2024

The analysis of the cost of living reports for July and August 2024 indicates several notable changes in prices for key commodities across different cities in Malawi, which have significantly impacted the overall cost of living. The cost of living has slightly increased from K516, 377 in July to K519, 763 in August, representing an increase of 0.7%.

Key Commodities Contributing to the Change

Maize: The price of maize, a staple food for Malawians, increased in almost all cities. For example, in Lilongwe, the price rose from K39, 375 in July to K42, 500 in August, contributing significantly to the rise in the overall food basket. Maize's price increase was consistent across other cities, such as Zomba (from K45, 429 to K50, 000), Blantyre (from K43, 929 to K48,333), and Karonga (from K30,000 to K33,333). This surge in

maize prices can be attributed to a combination of factors, including reduced supply due to poor harvests and increased demand.

Charcoal: Charcoal prices also saw substantial increases, particularly in urban areas like Blantyre, where it jumped from K46, 429 in July to K50, 000 in August. Charcoal is a critical energy source for many households, especially in urban settings, making this increase particularly burdensome for families already struggling with high living costs.

Cooking Oil: The price of cooking oil, particularly Kazinga Cooking Oil, rose significantly in cities such as Lilongwe (from K4, 631 to K5, 000) and Zomba (from K4, 448 to K5, 000). Cooking oil is an essential kitchen commodity, and its price increase contributes to the rising cost of food preparation.

Bread: The price of bread also increased in most cities, affecting the cost of breakfast for many households. In Blantyre, for instance, the price of bread rose from K1, 500 in July to K1, 800 in August, making it more expensive for families to afford this staple.

Impact on Malawians

The rising prices of these key commodities are expected to have several adverse effects on Malawians:

Increased Food Insecurity: The rising price of maize, coupled with higher costs of other food items like cooking oil and bread, will likely exacerbate food insecurity, especially for low-income households. Families will struggle to afford sufficient and nutritious food, leading to an increased risk of malnutrition, particularly among children.

Reduced Disposable Income: As the cost of essential items like food, housing, and energy (charcoal) increases, households will have less disposable income for other necessities, such as healthcare, education, and transportation. This could lead to a reduction in the quality of life, as families prioritize spending on immediate needs over long-term investments.

Increased Poverty Levels: The combined effect of rising living costs and stagnant incomes is likely to push more households below the poverty line. This will increase the burden on social safety nets and may lead to greater inequality.

Centre for Social Concern's (CfSC) recommendations for Mitigation

To mitigate the impact of rising costs, Centre for Social Concern suggest that the Malawi Government should consider the following measures:

Subsidizing Staple Foods

The government could introduce or enhance subsidies on staple foods like maize and cooking oil to make them more affordable for the majority of the population. This could help stabilize prices and prevent further increases in food insecurity.

Expanding Social Safety Nets

Expanding programs such as cash transfers and food aid to reach more vulnerable populations could provide immediate relief to those most affected by the rising cost of living. This would help cushion the poorest households from the brunt of the price increases.

Promoting Alternative Energy Sources

To reduce the reliance on charcoal, the government could promote alternative energy sources, such as affordable cooking gas or improved cooking stoves that use less fuel. This would not only help stabilize charcoal prices but also reduce environmental degradation from deforestation.

Increasing Agricultural Productivity

Investing in agricultural productivity, particularly in maize production, could help increase supply and stabilize prices. This could involve providing farmers with access to improved seeds, fertilizers, and extension services to boost yields.

Strengthening Price Controls and Monitoring

The government could strengthen its price control mechanisms to prevent unwarranted price hikes by traders. Regular monitoring of market prices and strict enforcement of regulations would help ensure that price increases are justified and not driven by speculative practices.

By implementing these measures, the Malawi Government can help alleviate the burden of rising costs on households and ensure that more Malawians can maintain a decent standard of living despite the current economic challenges.

Monthly average for the cost of living

	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
Monthly Average	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Amount (MWK)	386,192	389,455	397,134	433,793	455,707	491,037	503,876	510,720	521,936	500,154	510,634	516,377	519,763

Graph showing monthly average for the cost of living



Fuel Cost

Fuel (cost at the pump)	
Diesel (per litre)	K2734
Petrol (per litre)	K2530
Paraffin (per litre)	K1910

Minibus Fare

Minibus fare to town and back	
Lilongwe	K3000
Zomba	K1900
Blantyre	K1200
Mzuzu	K 1600

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 734 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source: <https://www.wise.com/> : The Social Conditions Research Programme of the Centre for Social Concern
 Conducted these surveys from 24th to 26th August, 2024 in the cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and peri-urban areas of Karonga and Mangochi

NOTE: The data on electricity, housing, water and other additional costs is collected and analyzed on quarterly basis

