



**CfSC**

# The Centre for Social Concern

## Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for October 2024



### RISING COST OF LIVING WORSENS HOUSEHOLD VULNERABILITY

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) is deeply concerned about the significant rise in the cost of living, as highlighted by the October 2024 Cost-of-Living Report. The average Basic Needs Basket for a household of six in all survey areas has risen from **K523, 648** in September to **K540, 353** in October, an increase of K16,705. Similar trends have been observed in other urban centers, with costs escalating due to the surging prices of essential food and non-food items.

*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 October 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	39,750	79,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	750	10,500	Protex	1,188	11,880
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,313	27,603	Boom	1,319	10,552
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	18,236	18,236	Clere Body Lotion	2,081	4,162
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	17,450	13,960	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,838	5,676
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	12,890	12,890
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	11,848	11,848
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	273	13,104	Housing (3 bedroom)	95,170	95,170
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	675	15,188		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>252,178</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,351	20,265	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>590,765</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,827	6,395	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,119	16,785	<b>Education</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,144	15,432	Secondary (fees) per year		87,000
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,638	32,760	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,581	20,648	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		39,000
Kitchen Salt	1,188	1,188	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		42,750
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	266	10,640	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		24,250
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	774	12,384		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>196,000</b>
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>338,587</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>196,000</b>

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	44,571	89,142	Charcoal (50 kgs)	22,571	45,142
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,500	15,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,500	28,800	Boom	1,664	13,312
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	11,429	11,429	Clere Body Lotion	3,100	6,200
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	17,857	14,286	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,500	7,000
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	18,023	18,023
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,714	26,856	Running Water (meter)	15,089	15,089
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	73,846	73,846
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	971	21,848		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>193,612</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,171	17,565	<b>Zomba Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>553,617</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,457	5,100	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000	<b>Education</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	6,500	19,500	Secondary (fees) per year		110,159
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,600	32,000	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,671	21,368	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,312
Kitchen Salt	1,200	1,200	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		64,266
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	150	6,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		30,132
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,157	18,512		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>270,869</b>
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>360,005</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>270,869</b>

### Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	45,000	90,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	46,429	92,858
Milling (Including Grinding)	400	5,600	Protex	1,271	12,710
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,171	26,694	Boom	1,400	11,200
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	25,714	25,714	Clere Body Lotion	1,757	3,514
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	31,000	24,800	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,600	5,200
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	28,857	23,086	Electricity	20,478	20,478
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	20,550	20,550
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	250	12,000	Housing (3 bedroom)	73,023	73,023
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	671	15,098	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>239,533</b>	
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,521	22,815	<b>Blantyre Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>618,234</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,843	6,451			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000			
C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,586	16,758	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,557	31,140	Secondary (fees) per year		69,624
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,571	20,568	Primary (GPF) per year		5,319
Kitchen Salt	914	914	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		89,712
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	100	4,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		66,696
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,129	18,064	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		37,115
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>378,701</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>268,465</b>	

### Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	36,083	72,166	Charcoal (50 kgs)	19,450	38,900
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,400	33,600	Protex	2,367	23,670
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,267	20,909	Boom	1,158	9,264
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	15,000	15,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	26,500	21,200	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,525	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	5,000	4,000	Electricity	8,554	8,554
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	7,000	28,000	Running Water (meter)	7,331	7,331
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	41,552	41,552
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,135	25,538	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>135,337</b>	
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,598	38,970	<b>Mzuzu Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>530,521</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,350	8,225			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000			
C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,767	17,301	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,883	37,660	Secondary (fees) per year		90,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,600	20,800	Primary (GPF) per year		5,488
Kitchen Salt	2,280	2,280	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		46,900
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	446	7,136	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		29,258
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>395,184</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>572,509</b>	

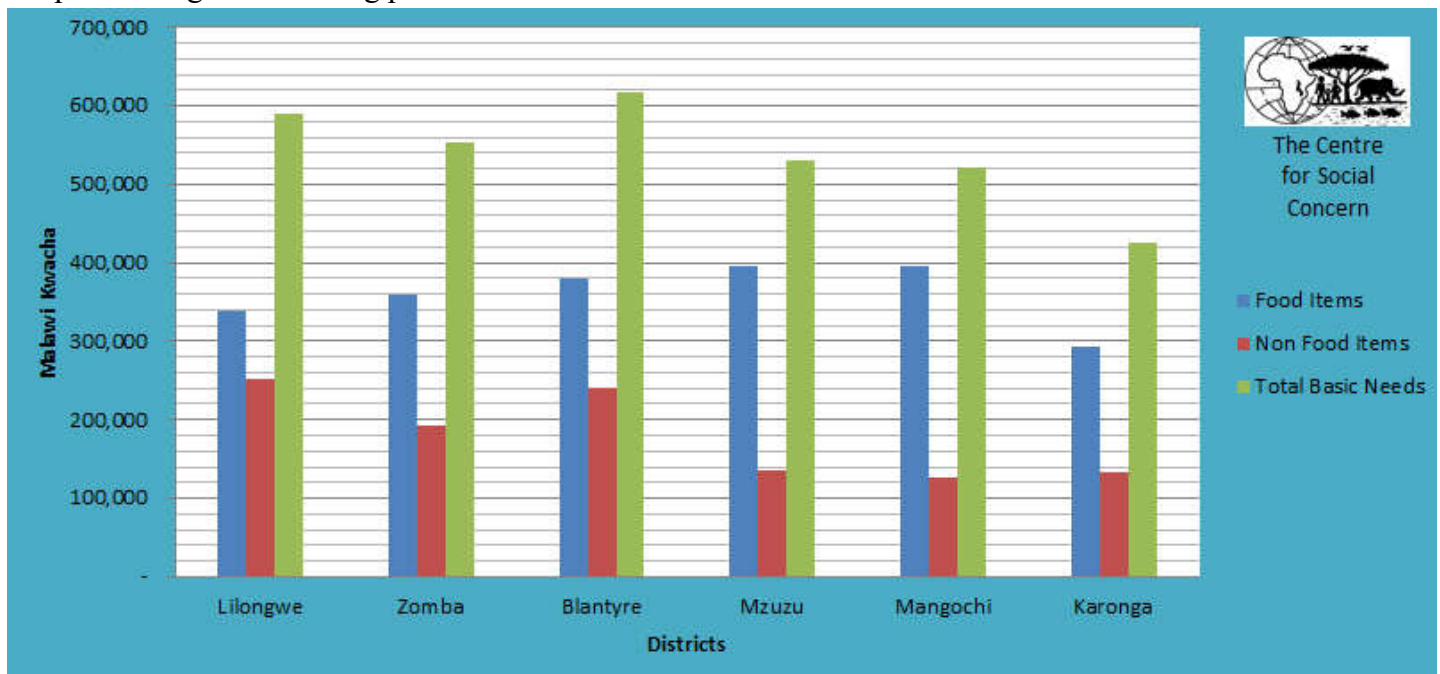
Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	43,667	87,334	Charcoal (50 kgs)	13,500	27,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	2,000	20,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,833	24,531	Boom	1,200	9,600
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	20,333	20,333	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	24,333	19,466	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,000	1,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	25,000	20,000	Electricity	9,484	9,484
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	10,165	10,165
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	44,351	44,351
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	889	20,003	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>127,200</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,867	28,005	<b>Mangochi Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>522,421</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,100	7,350			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,333	12,999	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,700	34,000	Secondary (fees) per year	97,992	
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,700	21,600	Primary (GPF) per year	9,384	
Kitchen Salt	1,000	1,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	87,063	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	88,388	
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,200	19,200	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	50,809	
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>395,221</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>333,637</b>

Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for October 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	33,750	67,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	24,850	49,700
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	1,498	14,980
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,322	10,576
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,000	7,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,800	5,600
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,800	5,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	7,000	5,600	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	850	19,125	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>133,205</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	825	12,375	<b>Karonga Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>426,557</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	925	3,238			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,190	17,850	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,365	16,095	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,575	31,500	Secondary (fees) per year	91,998	
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,600	20,800	Primary (GPF) per year	7,488	
Kitchen Salt	390	390	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	56,277	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	75,278	
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,000	16,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	22,153	
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>293,353</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>253,194</b>

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	338,587	252,178	590,765
Zomba	360,005	193,612	553,617
Blantyre	378,701	239,533	618,234
Mzuzu	395,184	135,337	530,521
Mangochi	395,221	127,200	522,421
Karonga	293,353	133,205	426,557

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

## Key Drivers of the Rising Cost of Living

### 1. Food Price Increases:

- **Maize:** A staple food for many Malawians, maize prices has stagnated, at K39, 500 per 50kg bag in Lilongwe though still high for the low income earner. Other districts report alarming increases, with Zomba at K44,571, Blantyre at K45,000 and Mangochi at K43,667
- **Dry Fish:** Usipa and Utaka/Mcheni have become significantly costlier, with notable increases in Lilongwe (usipa up to K18,236 per 4 days' supply) and Blantyre (Utaka/Mcheni at K24,800 for the same period). These protein-rich items are now unaffordable for many households.
- **Cooking Oil:** The cost of cooking oil remains elevated, with a 30-day supply in Lilongwe costing K15, 432, further straining household budgets.

## 2. **Non-Food Commodities:**

- **Charcoal:** The demand for alternative cooking fuel has pushed charcoal prices to K50,000 in Lilongwe and K46,429 in Blantyre per 50kg, exacerbating environmental degradation and financial pressure.

## 3. **Education and Utility Costs:**

- Households continue to grapple with increased education expenses, such as secondary school fees reaching K110,159 per year in Zomba. Electricity and water bills also remain burdensome, with average monthly costs exceeding K12, 000 in most cities.

## **Socio-Economic Implications**

The sustained rise in living costs has severe consequences for household food security and overall well-being. Families are being forced to make difficult trade-offs, such as reducing meal frequency, substituting nutritious foods with cheaper alternatives, or foregoing essential services like healthcare and education.

Additionally, the increased reliance on unsustainable fuel sources, such as charcoal, has long-term implications for environmental conservation and climate resilience.

## **Call to Action**

The CfSC urges the government and stakeholders to take immediate action to address the root causes of this crisis:

### **Stabilize Food Prices**

Ensure availability of maize and other essential commodities through strategic interventions, including subsidies and improved distribution systems.

### **Strengthen Social Protection**

Expand and adequately fund safety net programs to cushion vulnerable populations.

### **Promote Affordable Energy Alternatives**

Increase access to sustainable energy sources to mitigate reliance on charcoal.

The Centre for Social Concern remains committed to advocating for evidence-based solutions to improve household livelihoods and reduce the growing socio-economic divide in Malawi.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2023	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Amount (MWK)	397,134	433,793	455,707	491,037	503,876	510,720	521,936	500,154	510,634	516,377	519,763	523,648	540,353

Graph showing monthly average for the cost of living



**Fuel Cost**

<b>Fuel (cost at the pump)</b>	
Diesel (per litre)	K2734
Petrol (per litre)	K2530
Paraffin (per litre)	K1910

**Minibus Fare**

<b>Minibus fare to town and back</b>	
Lilongwe	K3000
Zomba	K1900
Blantyre	K1200
Mzuzu	K1 600

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 722.22 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/> ; The Social Conditions Research Programme of the Centre for Social Concern  
Conducted these surveys from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> October, 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**