



**CfSC**

# The Centre for Social Concern

## Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for September 2024



### RISING COSTS OF ESSENTIAL GOODS DEEPEN ECONOMIC STRUGGLES FOR MALAWIAN

#### HOUSEHOLDS

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) has noted with concern the rising cost of living in Malawi, with the average monthly cost of basic needs for a household of six increasing from MWK 519,763 in August to MWK 523,648 in September 2024. This reflects an upward trend in both food and non-food commodity prices, exacerbating the economic hardships faced by many households.

*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 September 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	39,500	79,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	44,375	88,750
Milling (Including Grinding)	713	9,982	Protex	1,163	11,630
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,188	26,803	Boom	1,313	10,504
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	21,366	21,366	Clere Body Lotion	1,913	3,826
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	17,060	13,648	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,738	5,476
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	275	13,200	Housing (3 bedroom)	95,170	95,170
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	634	14,265		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>240,094</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,211	18,165	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>571,659</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,087	3,805			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	981	14,715	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,828	14,484	<b>Education</b>		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,638	32,760	Secondary (fees) per year		87,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,388	19,104	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Kitchen Salt	1,100	1,100	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		39,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	242	9,680	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		42,750
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	968	15,488	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		24,250
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>331,565</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>196,000</b>

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for September 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	45,429	90,858	Charcoal (50 kgs)	22,571	45,142
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,743	17,430
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,357	27,885	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	14,286	11,429	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	1,086	24,435		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>191,732</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,400	21,000	<b>Zomba Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>540,661</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,300	4,550			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,500	16,500	<b>Education</b>		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,600	32,000	Secondary (fees) per year		110,159
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,500	20,000	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,000	1,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,312
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	161	6,440	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		64,266
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	786	12,576	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		30,132
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>348,929</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>270,869</b>

### Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for September 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	1,221	12,210
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,171	26,694	Boom	1,300	10,400
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	26,571	26,571	Clere Body Lotion	1,714	3,428
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	31,000	24,800	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,600	5,200
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	27,143	21,714	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	700	15,750	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>235,289</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,100	16,500	<b>Blantyre Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>600,645</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,357	4,750			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	979	14,685			
			C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,971	14,913	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,536	30,720	Secondary (fees) per year		69,624
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,393	19,144	Primary (GPF) per year		5,319
Kitchen Salt	921	921	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		89,712
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	100	4,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		66,696
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,171	18,736	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		37,115
<b>Sub-Total</b>			<b>365,356</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>268,465</b>

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

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	36,083	72,166	Charcoal (50 kgs)	18,400	36,800
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,400	33,600	Protex	2,342	23,420
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,000	19,200	Boom	842	6,736
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	17,000	17,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	26,833	21,466	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,513	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	280	13,440	Housing (3 bedroom)	41,552	41,552
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,120	25,200	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>130,459</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,450	36,750	<b>Mzuzu Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>519,815</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,228	7,798			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000			
			C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,580	16,740	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,850	37,000	Secondary (fees) per year		90,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,600	20,800	Primary (GPF) per year		5,488
Kitchen Salt	2,260	2,260	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		46,900
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	371	5,936	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		29,258
<b>Sub-Total</b>			<b>389,356</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>572,509</b>

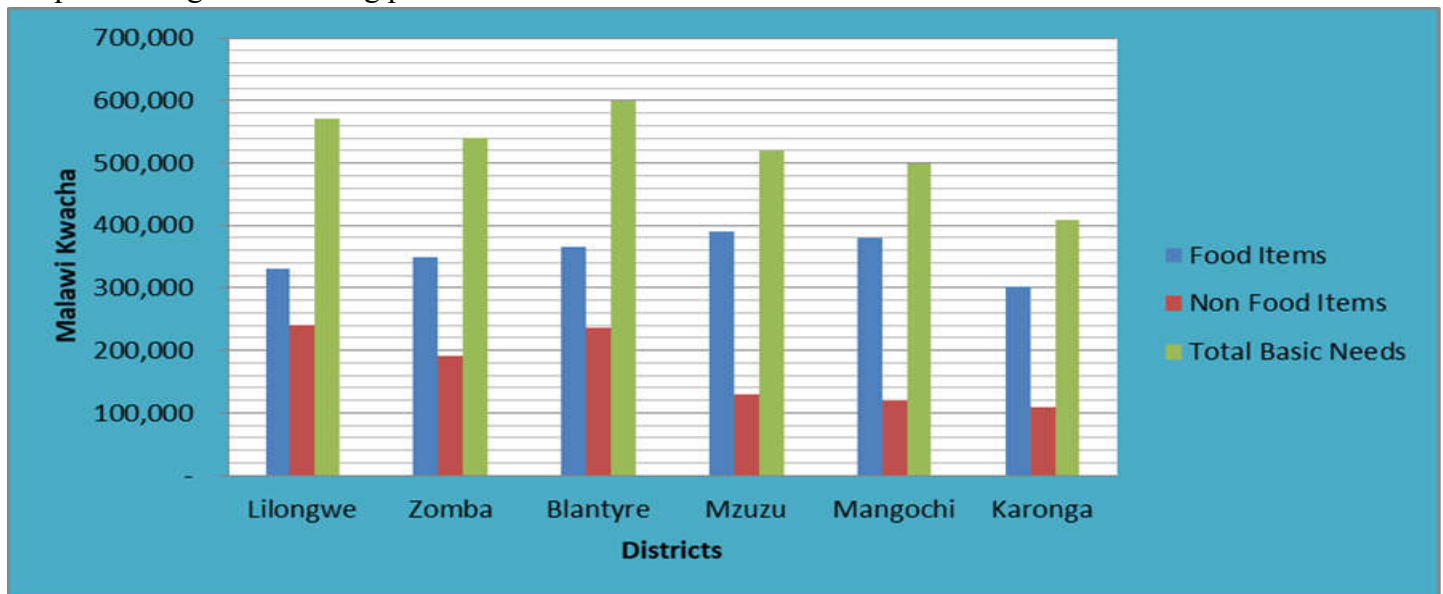
Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for September 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	42,333	84,666	Charcoal (50 kgs)	9,667	19,334
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	2,000	20,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,000	25,600	Boom	1,200	9,600
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	18,333	18,333	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	24,667	19,734	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,000	1,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	24,000	19,200	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	877	19,733		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>119,534</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,400	21,000		<b>Mangochi Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>500,065</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,733	6,066			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,000	15,000	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year		97,992
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,500	20,000	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/)	1,300	20,800	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		50,809
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>380,531</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>333,637</b>

Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for September 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	30,000	60,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	16,250	32,500
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	925	9,250
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,150	9,200
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	15,000	15,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,599	5,198
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,600	5,200
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	600	13,500		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>108,097</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,775	26,625		<b>Karonga Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>409,046</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,910	6,685			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	885	13,275	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,798	14,394	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year		91,998
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,300	18,400	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
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>300,949</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	331,565	240,094	571,659
Zomba	348,929	191,732	540,661
Blantyre	365,356	235,289	600,645
Mzuzu	389,356	130,459	519,815
Mangochi	380,531	119,534	500,065
Karonga	300,949	108,097	409,046

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 Increased Cost of Living**

### **1. Food Prices**

The price of staple foods continues to rise, driven by challenges such as poor harvests, erratic rainfall, and high production costs. Key contributors include:

**Maize:** Increases in maize prices were observed across all regions. For instance, the average cost in Lilongwe rose from MWK 39,750 in August to MWK 41,500 in September, with similar trends in Blantyre and Mangochi.

**Dry Fish:** Prices for dry Utaka and Mcheni saw significant hikes, particularly in Blantyre and Mangochi, due to transportation and storage challenges.

**Cooking Oil:** The price of Kazinga cooking oil increased in most regions, with a notable rise in Mzuzu and Mangochi, reflecting higher import and processing costs.

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

Non-food essentials have also become costlier, straining household budgets. Notable examples include:

**Charcoal:** Prices spiked in urban areas such as Lilongwe and Blantyre, driven by increased demand and supply constraints.

**Electricity and Water:** Tariffs have risen slightly in some regions, contributing to the overall increase in living costs.

## **Socio-Economic Implications**

The continued rise in living costs has significant implications for Malawi's socio-economic stability:

**Food Insecurity:** Many households are unable to afford a nutritious diet, increasing the risk of malnutrition, especially among children.

**Economic Inequality:** The gap between the affluent and the underprivileged continues to widen as essential goods become unaffordable for low-income families.

**Education Disruptions:** Higher costs of essential non-food items, including school fees and supplies, risk pushing more children out of school.

## **Recommendations**

To mitigate the effects of the rising cost of living, the CfSC urges the government, development partners, and stakeholders to:

**Stabilize Staple Food Prices:** Strengthen agricultural policies to improve maize production and ensure affordable prices.

**Subsidize Energy Costs:** Provide targeted subsidies for electricity and alternative cooking fuels to alleviate the pressure on households.

**Expand Social Safety Nets:** Scale up cash transfer programs to support vulnerable households in meeting their basic needs.

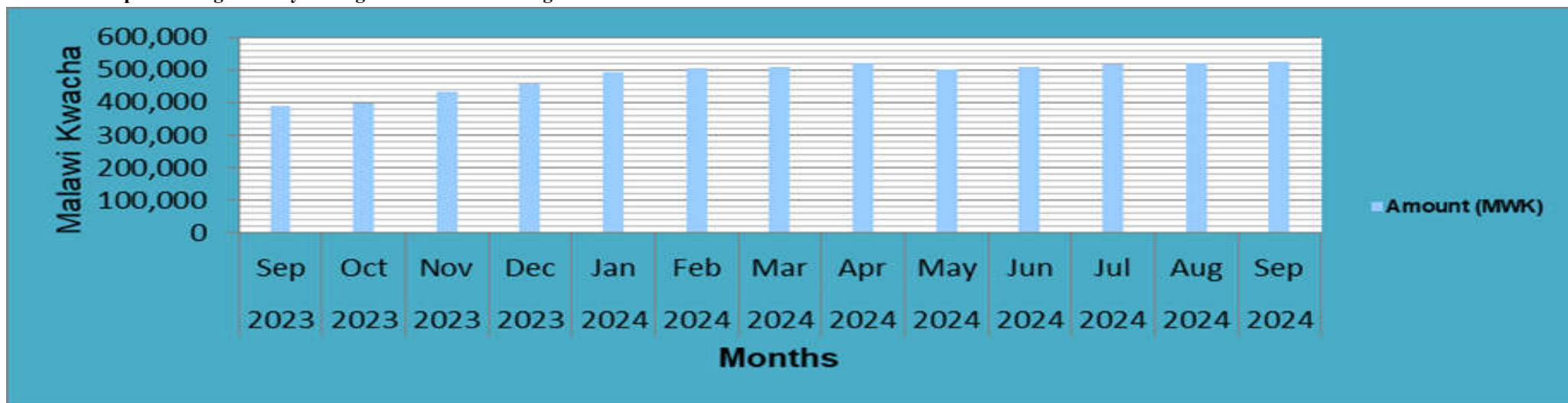
**Monitor and Regulate Prices:** Establish effective mechanisms to monitor and address price hikes in key commodities.

The CfSC remains committed to advocating for economic justice and improving the livelihoods of Malawians. We call upon all stakeholders to prioritize actions that cushion the population against these economic shocks.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2023	2023	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Amount (MWK)	389,455	397,134	433,793	455,707	491,037	503,876	510,720	521,936	500,154	510,634	516,377	519,763	523,648

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	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 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September, 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**