



CfSC

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for November 2024



ESCALATING MAIZE PRICES DEEPEN HUNGER AND HARDSHIP FOR MALAWIAN FAMILIES

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) has observed a significant increase in the cost of living due to a surge in maize prices between October and November 2024. This has exacerbated economic hardships, particularly for low-income earners who rely heavily on maize as a staple food.

These price hikes reflect growing demand against a backdrop of insufficient supply due to the effects of climate change, poor storage practices, and limited market regulation.

*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 November 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	40,625	81,250	Charcoal (50 kgs)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	750	10,500	Protex	1,200	12,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,500	28,800	Boom	1,369	10,952
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	16,783	16,783	Clere Body Lotion	1,938	3,876
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	17,670	14,136	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,725	5,450
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	304	14,592	Housing (3 bedroom)	95,170	95,170
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	555	12,488	Sub-Total		252,186
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,186	17,790	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		601,316
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,907	6,675			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,219	18,285	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	5,725	17,175	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,681	33,620	Secondary (fees) per year		87,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,625	21,000	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Kitchen Salt	1,125	1,125	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		39,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		42,750
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,307	20,912	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		24,250
Sub-Total		349,130	Sub-Total		196,000

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for November 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	51,086	102,172	Charcoal (50 kgs)	18,571	37,142
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,571	15,710
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,286	40,230	Boom	2,129	17,032
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	20,000	20,000	Clere Body Lotion	3,536	7,072
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	20,000	16,000	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	1,743	39,218	Sub-Total		190,914
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,314	34,710	Zomba Total Basic Needs		642,141
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,814	9,849			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	7,000	21,000	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,714	34,280	Secondary (fees) per year		110,159
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,700	21,600	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,200	1,200	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,312
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	200	8,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		64,266
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,857	29,712	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		30,132
Sub-Total		451,227	Sub-Total		270,869

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for November 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	Sub-Total	239,533	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,521	22,815	Blantyre Total Basic Needs	618,234	
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
	Sub-Total	378,701	Sub-Total	268,465	

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for November 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	39,167	78,334	Charcoal (50 kgs)	18,683	37,366
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,400	33,600	Protex	2,383	23,830
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,300	21,120	Boom	1,533	12,264
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	15,000	15,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	26,667	21,334	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	1,163	26,168	Sub-Total	136,963	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,670	40,050	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs	545,150	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,558	8,953			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000			
			C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	6,175	18,525	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,900	38,000	Secondary (fees) per year		90,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,867	22,936	Primary (GPF) per year		5,488
Kitchen Salt	2,600	2,600	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		69,254
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		80,000
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	448	7,168	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		29,258
	Sub-Total	408,187	Sub-Total	572,509	

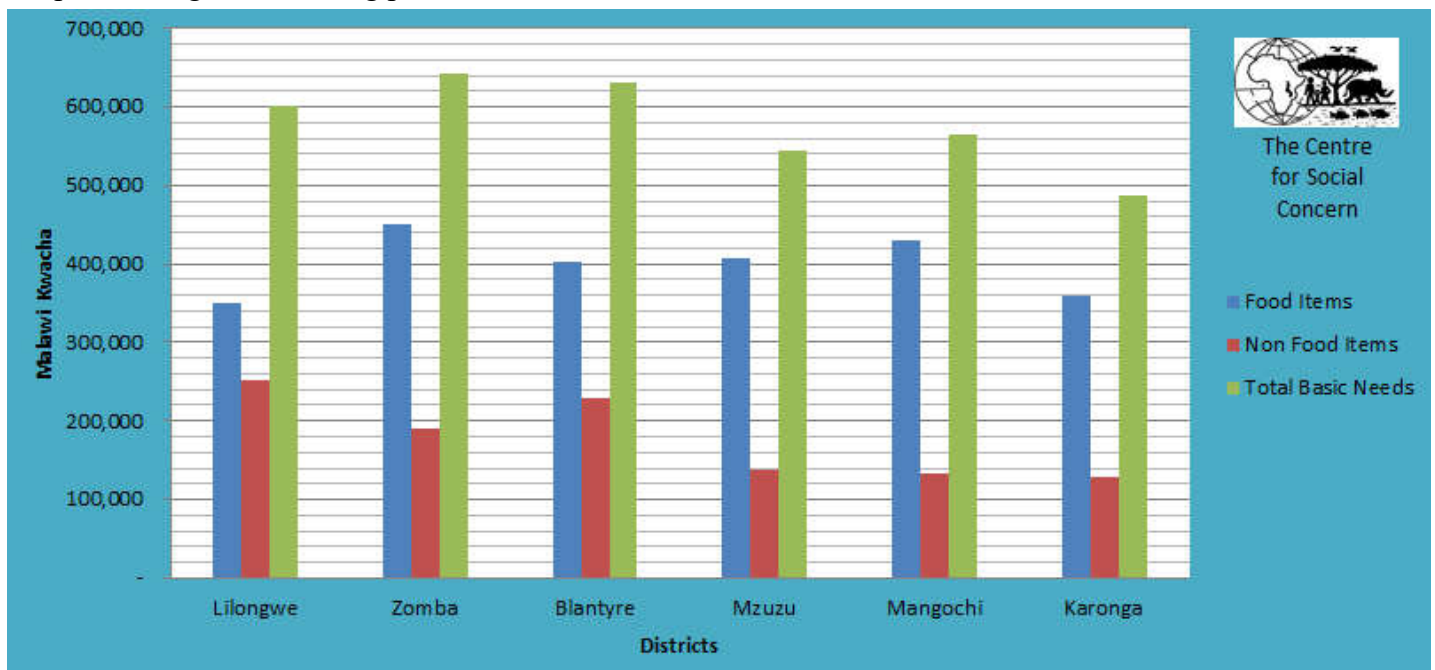
Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for November 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	48,000	96,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	16,767	33,534
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	2,000	20,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,100	13,440	Boom	1,200	9,600
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	26,667	26,667	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	25,000	20,000	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	350	16,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	44,351	44,351
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,333	29,993		Sub-Total	133,734
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,033	30,495		Mangochi Total Basic Needs	564,908
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,500	8,750			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	6,167	18,501	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,800	36,000	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)	400	16,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		88,388
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,433	22,928	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		50,809
	Sub-Total	431,174		Sub-Total	333,637

Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for November 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	37,500	75,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	24,900	49,800
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	1,050	10,500
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,263	10,104
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,000	7,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,648	5,296
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,575	5,150
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	7,000	5,600	Electricity	5,953	5,953
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	8,000	32,000	Running Water (meter)	7,838	7,838
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	350	16,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	32,958	32,958
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	650	14,625		Sub-Total	127,599
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,575	38,625		Karonga Total Basic Needs	487,504
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,900	10,150			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,294	19,410	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	6,275	18,825	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,000	40,000	Secondary (fees) per year		91,998
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,750	22,000	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/)	1,500	24,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		22,153
	Sub-Total	359,905		Sub-Total	253,194

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	349,130	252,186	601,316
Zomba	451,227	190,914	642,141
Blantyre	378,702	239,533	618,234
Mzuzu	408,187	136,963	545,150
Mangochi	431,174	133,734	564,908
Karonga	359,905	127,599	487,504

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

Maize Price Trends

Between October and November 2024, maize prices for a 50kg bag increased in most regions of Malawi, reflecting growing economic pressures on low-income households. In **Lilongwe**, prices rose marginally by **2.2%**, from K39,750 to K40,625. A significant price surge was observed in **Zomba**, where the cost increased by **14.6%**, jumping from K44,571 to K51,086.

In **Mzuzu**, the price rose by **8.5%**, from K36,083 to K39,167, while **Mangochi** experienced a **9.9% increase**, with prices climbing from K43,667 to K48,000. In **Karonga**, the price change was also notable, with an **11.1% rise**, from K33,750 to K37,500. Meanwhile, prices in **Blantyre** remained unchanged at K45,000.

These price changes highlight regional disparities in maize pricing, with Zomba, Mangochi, and Karonga experiencing the steepest increases. The overall trend points to the need for urgent interventions to stabilize prices and ensure accessibility for the most vulnerable households.

Cost of Living

The average monthly cost of living for a family of six rose from **K540,353 in October** to **K578,843 in**

November 2024, a 7.1% increase. This rise further limits the purchasing power of low-income households, making it harder for families to afford basic necessities, including food.

Impact on Low-Income Earners

For many Malawians, maize constitutes over 50% of daily caloric intake. Price increases directly reduce household food security and force families to compromise on other essential needs like healthcare, education, and housing. The situation is particularly dire for rural and urban poor who are already struggling with stagnant wages and limited income-generating opportunities.

Recommendations to the Malawi Government and Stakeholders

To mitigate the effects of rising maize prices and sustainably achieve national and household food security, Centre for Social Concern recommends the following measures:

Enhancing Agricultural Productivity:

Provide affordable and timely access to improved seeds, fertilizers, and climate-smart agricultural technologies.

Establishing Strategic Grain Reserves:

Strengthen the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) to stabilize maize prices during lean seasons.

Improving Market Regulation:

Monitor and regulate private traders to prevent price gouging and speculative activities.

Investing in Irrigation:

Expand smallholder irrigation schemes to reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

Promoting Crop Diversification:

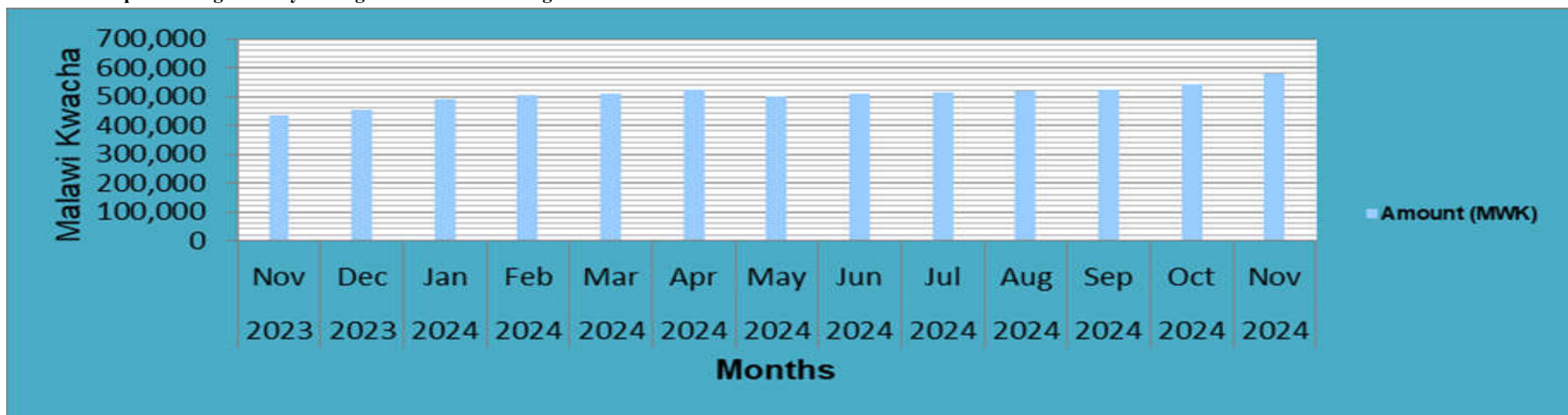
Support the production and consumption of alternative crops to reduce over-reliance on maize.

Addressing maize price volatility and the rising cost of living requires immediate and concerted action. The CfSC urges the Malawi Government and other stakeholders to implement these measures to protect vulnerable populations and ensure food security for all Malawians.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Amount (MWK)	433,793	455,707	491,037	503,876	510,720	521,936	500,154	510,634	516,377	519,763	523,648	540,353	578,843

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)	K1920

Minibus Fare

Minibus fare to town and back	
Lilongwe	K3000
Zomba	K1200
Blantyre	K1200
Mzuzu	K1 600

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 728.30 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 26th to 27th November, 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

