

CFSC-RURAL BASIC NEEDS BASKET PROJECT: TAs MMBELWA (MZ), TAMBALA (DZ), MASEYA (CK), KANYENDA (KK)

December 2024 Report

Ideal Food Cost

During the month of December 2024, the cost of ideal food items that make up 1800 kilocalories increased across all TAs, with the highest cost at **K188, 951 from K176, 238 in September** in TA Kanyenda (Nkhotakota) and the lowest at **K143, 943 from K143,567** in September in TA Maseya (Chikwawa).

In TA Kanyenda, for example, a household would have needed **K188, 951 to** purchase food items providing the minimum 1800 kilocalories, while the average monthly income of **K80, 280** in the area is no longer sufficient to cover both food costs and other basic needs.

Cost of Living

In December 2024, the overall cost of living, including both ideal food and non-food costs, also saw a significant increase. The highest cost of living was reported in **TA Kanyenda** (Nkhotakota) at **K288, 868 (in September it was K267, 774)**, while **TA M'mbelwa** (Mzimba) had the lowest at **K250, 283**.

Despite the rise in living costs, household income remained insufficient to meet basic needs. Households in **M'mbelwa, Mzimba** only secured **K194, 638** from various income sources, below the required amount to cover the increased cost of living.

Coping Mechanisms

As a result of the rising cost of living, households in these areas have adopted various coping strategies to survive the lean period. In **TA Tambala** (Dedza), a significant portion (60%) of households abandoned their fields to work for others in exchange for food or cash, while 68% of households reduced meal portions. 67% of households in **TA Tambala** (Dedza) also reduced the number of meals per day, and 61% reduced adult food consumption to ensure that children had enough to eat.

Kilocalorie Intake

The average kilocalorie intake decreased compared to the previous quarter, reflecting the rising food costs. Despite the decrease, the kilocalorie intake, 1800 according to FAO, remained adequate across all TAs during the 4th quarter of 2024. However, households across the TAs under study did not reach the Kilo calorie intake of the World Health Organization which is at 2400 kilo calories per person per day. This is an indication of food insecurity.

Traditional Area	District	Actual Average Kilocalorie Intake
M'mbelwa	Mzimba	1892
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	1908
Tambala	Dedza	1811
Maseya	Chikwawa	1917

Cost of Ideal Food Items for a Family of Six for the Month of December 2024

Ideal Food Items	Weight	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)	TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)	TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)	TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)
Maize	20kg	K10,450	K12,640	K16,000	K14,220
Rice	10kg	K30,000	K25,700	K30,600	K23,692
Sugar	3kg	K7,500	K7,500	K7,500	K7,500
Beans	7kg	K18,788	K16,500	K8,600	K12,437
Eggs	40 eggs	K12,000	K12,000	K12,000	K12,000
Goat Meat	5kg	K30,000	K30,500	K30,000	K23,693
Tomato	20	K24,455	K38,896	K13,800	K11,855
Mustard	15kg	K7,550	K10,115	K9,808	K7,110
Cooking Oil	3 litres	K15,000	K16,800	K16,900	K12,442
Bananas	150	K19,500	K17,000	K19,700	K17,794
Salt	1kg	K1,200	K1,300	K1,000	K1,200
Total		K176,443	K188,951	K165,908	K143,943
Total Kilocalories Approx. 1800 (Kcal) - FAO		1892	1908	1811	1917

Cost of Ideal Non-Food Items for December 2024

Item	Quantity	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)	TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)	TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)	TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)
Butex	4 tabs	K8,810	K8,400	K8,300	9,400
Nirma	15 tabs	K7,710	K8,688	K7,890	8,600
Clere	3 bottles	K1,842	K4,146	K3,937	4,200
Glycerin	3 bottles	K2,178	K4,500	K4,076	6,445
Body Care	1 bottle	K4,500	K5,000	K4,800	5,300
Airtime	1	K5,000	K5,500	K5,500	5,500
Phone Charging	10x	K2,000	K2,000	K2,000	2,500
Charcoal	2 bags	K15,000	K15,800	K20,000	25,500
Batteries	9	K5,000	K5,183	K4,300	4,500
Matches	9 packs	K1,200	K1,200	K1,100	2,250
Kukonola	5 tins	K7,000	K5,000	K4,500	5,000
Milling	5 tins	K7,500	K5,000	K5,000	6,000
Bicycles	1	K3,500	K3,500	K3,700	3,740
Total Cost		K71,240	K73,917	K75,103	K88,935

Average Monthly Income for December 2024

Income Source	TA MMBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Cash Brought Forward	K125,000	K4,500	K3,250	K8,560
Casual Labour	K9,670	K13,555	K1,800	K18,600
Small Business	K29,292	K20,224	K2,240	K20,450
Loans from VSL	K2500	K0	K0	K0
Loans from Others	K1500	K9,000	K1,822	K0
Usury/Katapila	K900	K9,056	K0	K1,250
Crop Sales	K13,297	K17,345	K6,400	K23,000
Livestock Sales	K0	K2,300	K1,750	K1,754
Remittances	K0	K1500	K2,100	K9,080
Rent of Property	K2,761	K2,800	K1,856	K2,550
Other Sources	K9,718	K0	K5,508	K7,230
Total Income	K194,638	K80,280	K26,726	K92,474

Cost of Living (The Ideal Food Cost + Ideal Non Food Cost + Average School Expenses (K26, 000)

With a combined increase in food and non-food costs, the overall cost of living for December 2024 is as follows:

Traditional Area	Cost of Living
M'mbelwa	K250,283
Kanyenda	K288,868
Tambala	K267,011
Maseya	K258,878

Households are now spending more than they earn on essential needs. Measures to reduce food prices and non-food expenses are needed to ensure household survival through the coming months.

RISING COST OF LIVING THREATENS FOOD SECURITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) Calls for Urgent Government Intervention

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) is deeply concerned about the escalating cost of living in rural areas, as revealed in the December 2024 Rural Basic Needs Basket report. The findings highlight a worsening crisis where household incomes are failing to meet the rising costs of basic needs, pushing vulnerable communities deeper into poverty and food insecurity.

Escalating Food Costs and Cost of Living

The report shows that the cost of ideal food items providing the minimum 1,800 kilocalories per person per day has risen across all surveyed TAs. The cost of living, which includes both food and essential non-food items, also saw a significant rise.

Despite these rising costs, household incomes remain critically low. For example, in Nkhotakota, the average household income stands at K80,280, which is grossly insufficient to meet the increasing cost of food and other basic needs? This gap between income and expenditure is pushing households into desperate survival strategies, threatening their well-being and long-term economic stability.

Call for Government Action

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) urges the government to take immediate action to cushion the impact of rising food and living costs on vulnerable rural households. Specifically, CfSC recommends the following measures:

Subsidized Food Distribution

The government should scale up targeted food subsidies and relief programs in the most affected areas to ensure that vulnerable households can access sufficient and nutritious food.

Livelihood Support and Economic Empowerment

Expand social protection programs, such as cash transfers and input subsidies, to boost household income and food security, reducing dependence on unsustainable coping mechanisms.

Strengthening Agricultural Productivity

Provide timely access to affordable agricultural inputs, promote climate-smart agriculture, and enhance irrigation infrastructure to improve food production and reduce dependency on market purchases.

Income Diversification Programs: Invest in rural economic development programs, such as vocational training and small-scale enterprises, to create alternative income-generating opportunities for rural households.

Market Price Regulation: Strengthen policies to regulate food prices and prevent price gouging, ensuring that staple foods remain affordable for low-income households.

The rising cost of living is a national crisis that requires urgent attention. The Centre for Social Concern calls upon all stakeholders, including the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to collaborate in addressing this growing challenge to protect the livelihoods and dignity of Malawi's rural communities.

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 719.50 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source:

<https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/?>**The Social Conditions Research**

Programme of the CfSC conducted these quarterly surveys in the month of December

2024 in TAs M'mbelwa in Mzimba; Kanyenda in Nkhotakota; Tambala in Dedza and

Maseya in Chikwawa.

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