



**CfSC**

# The Centre for Social Concern

## Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for February 2025



### **RISING COST OF LIVING CONTINUES TO STRAIN MALAWIANS: URGENT INTERVENTION NEEDED**

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) is deeply concerned about the rising cost of living in Malawi, which has significantly increased from K694,653 in January 2025 to K797,908 in February 2025, representing a sharp rise of **14.9%** within a single month. This continuous increase is placing an unbearable burden on Malawian households, particularly low-income families who are struggling to afford basic necessities.

*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 February 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	85,000	170,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	52,094	104,188
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,813	25,382	Protex	1,275	12,750
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	5,938	38,003	Boom	2,038	16,304
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	23,264	23,264	Clere Body Lotion	3,175	6,350
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	23,589	18,871	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,763	7,526
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	14,363	14,363
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,813	27,252	Running Water (meter)	9,673	9,673
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	295	14,160	Housing (3 bedroom)	90,932	90,932
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,556	35,010	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>262,086</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	3,804	57,060	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>828,780</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,218	11,263			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,250	18,750	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	8,006	24,018	Education		
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	2,413	48,260	Secondary (fees) per year		87,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,300	26,400	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Kitchen Salt	1,369	1,369	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		39,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	306	12,240	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		42,750
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	962	15,392	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		24,250
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>566,694</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>196,000</b>

### Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for February 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	94,286	188,572	Charcoal (50 kgs)	20,071	40,142
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,514	15,140
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	7,000	44,800	Boom	2,036	16,288
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	19,286	19,286	Clere Body Lotion	3,664	7,328
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	19,286	15,429	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,500	9,000
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	22,759	22,759
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,571	26,284	Running Water (meter)	19,213	19,213
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	76,143	76,143
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,514	34,065	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>206,013</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	5,871	88,065	<b>Zomba Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>849,861</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,543	12,401			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,443	21,645	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	10,214	30,642	Education		
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	2,971	59,420	Secondary (fees) per year		110,159
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,857	30,856	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,464	1,464	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,312
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	223	8,920	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		64,266
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	2,100	33,600	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		30,132
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>643,848</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>270,869</b>

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for February 2025					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	90,714	181,428	Charcoal (50 kgs)	71,429	142,858
Milling (Including Grinding)	500	7,000	Protex	1,457	14,570
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,286	40,230	Boom	2,100	16,800
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	34,714	34,714	Clere Body Lotion	2,929	5,858
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	33,714	26,971	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,143	8,286
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	35,000	28,000	Electricity	21,365	21,365
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,500	22,000	Running Water (meter)	21,780	21,780
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	300	14,400	Housing (3 bedroom)	73,193	73,193
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	786	17,685	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>304,710</b>	
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	4,429	66,435	<b>Blantyre Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>916,388</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,814	13,349			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,336	20,040			
C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	8,571	25,713	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,886	57,720	Secondary (fees) per year		69,624
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,157	25,256	Primary (GPF) per year		5,319
Kitchen Salt	1,200	1,200	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		89,712
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	150	6,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		66,696
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,471	23,536	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		37,115
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>611,678</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>268,465</b>	

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for February 2025					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	80,000	160,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	23,167	46,334
Milling (Including Grinding)	3,000	42,000	Protex	2,400	24,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	4,967	31,789	Boom	1,850	14,800
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	29,667	29,667	Clere Body Lotion	2,642	5,284
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	51,333	41,066	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,638	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	13,167	10,534	Electricity	8,554	8,554
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	7,833	31,332	Running Water (meter)	7,331	7,331
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	350	16,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	41,552	41,552
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,535	34,538	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>148,921</b>	
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	4,622	69,330	<b>Mzuzu Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>787,218</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,250	11,375			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,800	27,000			
C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	8,405	25,215	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,717	54,340	Secondary (fees) per year		90,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,733	29,864	Primary (GPF) per year		5,488
Kitchen Salt	3,160	3,160	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		69,254
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		80,000
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	518	8,288	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		29,258
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>638,297</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>572,509</b>	

### Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for February 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	90,000	180,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	13,667	27,334
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	2,500	25,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	5,000	32,000	Boom	1,400	11,200
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	33,000	33,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	32,333	25,866	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,000	1,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	32,667	26,134	Electricity	9,648	9,648
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	8,667	34,668	Running Water (meter)	9,113	9,113
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	350	16,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	45,260	45,260
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	2,533	56,993	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>134,155</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	5,833	87,495	<b>Mangochi Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>818,148</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,933	10,266			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,200	18,000			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,000	27,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,000	60,000	Education		
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,500	28,000	Secondary (fees) per year	97,992	
Kitchen Salt	1,500	1,500	Primary (GPF) per year	9,384	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	87,063	
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,267	20,272	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	88,388	
			Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	50,809	
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>683,993</b>		<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>333,637</b>

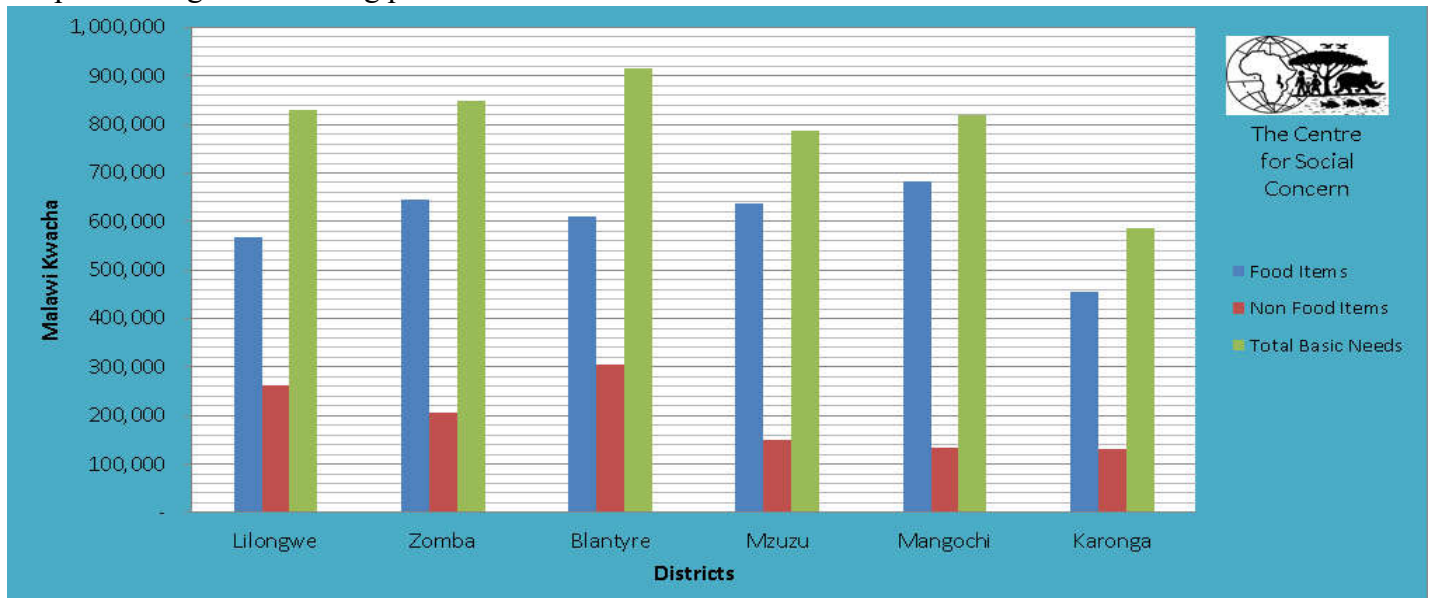
### Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for February 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	70,000	140,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	24,900	49,800
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,000	28,000	Protex	1,125	11,250
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,325	10,600
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	10,000	10,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,650	5,300
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,625	7,250
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	8,000	6,400	Electricity	6,304	6,304
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	8,000	32,000	Running Water (meter)	8,022	8,022
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	350	16,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	32,958	32,958
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	800	18,000	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>131,484</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	3,050	45,750	<b>Karonga Total Basic Needs</b>	<b>587,054</b>	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,000	10,500			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,325	19,875			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	6,325	18,975	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,200	44,000	Education		
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,300	26,400	Secondary (fees) per year	91,998	
Kitchen Salt	390	390	Primary (GPF) per year	7,488	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	56,277	
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,500	24,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	75,278	
			Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	22,153	
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>455,570</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	566,694	262,086	828,780
Zomba	643,848	206,013	849,861
Blantyre	611,678	304,710	916,388
Mzuzu	638,297	148,921	787,218
Mangochi	683,993	134,155	818,148
Karonga	455,570	131,484	587,054

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

## **RISING COST OF LIVING IN MALAWI: KEY COMMODITY PRICE INCREASES AND URGENT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Among the key commodities contributing to this rise are maize, cooking oil, sugar, and bread. Maize, being the country's staple food, has seen alarming price surges across major cities. In Lilongwe, maize prices rose by 43.2% from K59,375 in January to K85,000 in February. Zomba recorded a 19.2% increase, while Blantyre experienced a 30.3% rise. Mzuzu, Mangochi, and Karonga also saw maize price hikes of 22.3%, 28.6%, and 6.9%, respectively.

Cooking oil has also seen drastic price increases. In Zomba, the price jumped by 47.2%, while in Blantyre, it rose by 29.1%. Similarly, sugar and bread prices have steadily increased, further squeezing household budgets.

### **Impact on Malawians**

The continued rise in the cost of living is causing severe hardships for many Malawians, leading to:

- **Increased food insecurity:** Families are unable to afford nutritious meals, leading to malnutrition, especially among children and vulnerable groups.

- **Reduced disposable income:** As food prices soar, households are left with little to no money for other essential needs such as education, healthcare, and housing.
- **Rising poverty levels:** The inability to afford basic commodities is pushing more people into poverty, exacerbating economic inequalities.

## **Recommendations for Government Action**

To sustainably reduce the cost of living and cushion vulnerable populations, CfSC calls upon the government to take the following measures:

### **Enhance Agricultural Productivity**

The government must invest in large-scale irrigation farming, input subsidies, and climate-resilient agricultural practices to boost maize production and stabilize food supply.

### **Control Inflation and Stabilize Currency**

Macroeconomic policies should focus on curbing inflation and ensuring the Malawi Kwacha remains stable against foreign currencies to reduce import costs.

### **Strengthen Social Protection Programs**

Expand targeted cash transfers and food distribution programs to cushion low-income families from economic shocks.

### **Monitor and Regulate Essential Commodity Prices**

Strengthening price monitoring mechanisms and enforcing regulations on price gouging will help prevent excessive profiteering in the food market.

### **Promote Local Production of Essential Goods**

Encouraging local production of cooking oil, sugar, and bread will reduce reliance on imports and mitigate the impact of fluctuating global prices.

The rising cost of living requires urgent and sustained intervention. We urge the government and all relevant stakeholders to act swiftly to implement these measures and protect Malawians from further economic distress.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2025	2025
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Amount (MWK)	503,876	510,720	521,936	500,154	510,634	516,377	519,763	523,648	540,353	578,843	615,138	694,653	797,908

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	K4000
Zomba	K2000
Blantyre	K1800
Mzuzu	K 1800

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1,726.86 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 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February June , 2025 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**