



CfSC

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for March 2025



A SLIGHT DECLINE IN THE COST OF LIVING: NOT A RELIEF FOR MAJORITY OF MALAWIANS

Our latest survey under the Social Conditions Research Program, conducted in Mzuzu, Lilongwe, Blantyre, and Zomba, reveals that the average cost of living for a family of six stands at K841,219 in March 2025. This is a slight decline of K4, 342 (0.5%) from February's figure of K845, 561. This marginal relief is largely due to significant maize price drops in Zomba and Blantyre. Yet, for countless Malawian families, this figure remains a towering mountain—unclimbable and oppressive.

*Centre for Reflection,
Research and Action on
Issues of Social Concern
in the Light of the
Gospel and the Catholic
Social Teaching*

For More Information Contact Us On:

Centre for Social Concern

P.O. Box 40049

Kanengo, Lilongwe 4
Malawi

Tel: +265 991 843 249

E-mail: director@cfscmafr.org

Website: www.cfscmafr.org

Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for March 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	89,375	178,750	Charcoal (50 kgs)	60,031	120,062
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,075	29,050	Protex	1,481	14,810
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,375	40,800	Boom	2,250	18,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	25,781	25,781	Clere Body Lotion	3,463	6,926
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	31,520	25,216	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,725	7,450
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	23,499	23,499
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	7,250	29,000	Running Water (meter)	13,675	13,675
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	356	17,088	Housing (3 bedroom)	100,262	100,262
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,195	26,888	Sub-Total		304,684
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,192	32,880	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		889,719
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,288	8,008			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,338	20,070	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,031	27,093	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,163	63,260	Secondary (fees) per year		96,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,463	27,704	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Kitchen Salt	1,575	1,575	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		45,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	338	13,520	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		63,375
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,147	18,352	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		31,150
Sub-Total		585,035	Sub-Total		238,525

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for March 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	71,714	143,428	Charcoal (50 kgs)	20,071	40,142
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,200	16,800	Protex	1,729	17,290
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,500	41,600	Boom	2,414	19,312
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	31,429	31,429	Clere Body Lotion	4,300	8,600
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	32,857	26,286	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,071	8,142
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	21,149	21,149
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	8,000	32,000	Running Water (meter)	17,706	17,706
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	431	20,688	Housing (3 bedroom)	83,286	83,286
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,686	37,935	Sub-Total		215,627
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,129	16,935	Zomba Total Basic Needs		767,713
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,243	7,851			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,500	22,500	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	10,543	31,629	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,000	60,000	Secondary (fees) per year		105,868
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,543	28,344	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,526	1,526	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		82,602
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	200	8,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		89,144
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,571	25,136	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		36,878
Sub-Total		552,086	Sub-Total		323,491

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for March 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	55,714	111,428	Charcoal (50 kgs)	84,286	168,572
Milling (Including Grinding)	500	7,000	Protex	1,500	15,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,786	43,430	Boom	2,271	18,168
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	40,000	40,000	Clere Body Lotion	3,443	6,886
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	37,429	29,943	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,043	8,086
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	42,143	33,714	Electricity	20,018	20,018
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,786	23,144	Running Water (meter)	21,158	21,158
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	314	15,072	Housing (3 bedroom)	88,288	88,288
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,057	23,783	Sub-Total		346,176
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,371	35,565	Blantyre Total Basic Needs		883,223
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,571	8,999			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,321	19,815	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,000	27,000	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,886	57,720	Secondary (fees) per year		75,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,214	25,712	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Kitchen Salt	1,186	1,186	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		127,220
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	164	6,560	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		100,694
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,686	26,976	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		53,525
Sub-Total		537,047	Sub-Total		359,439

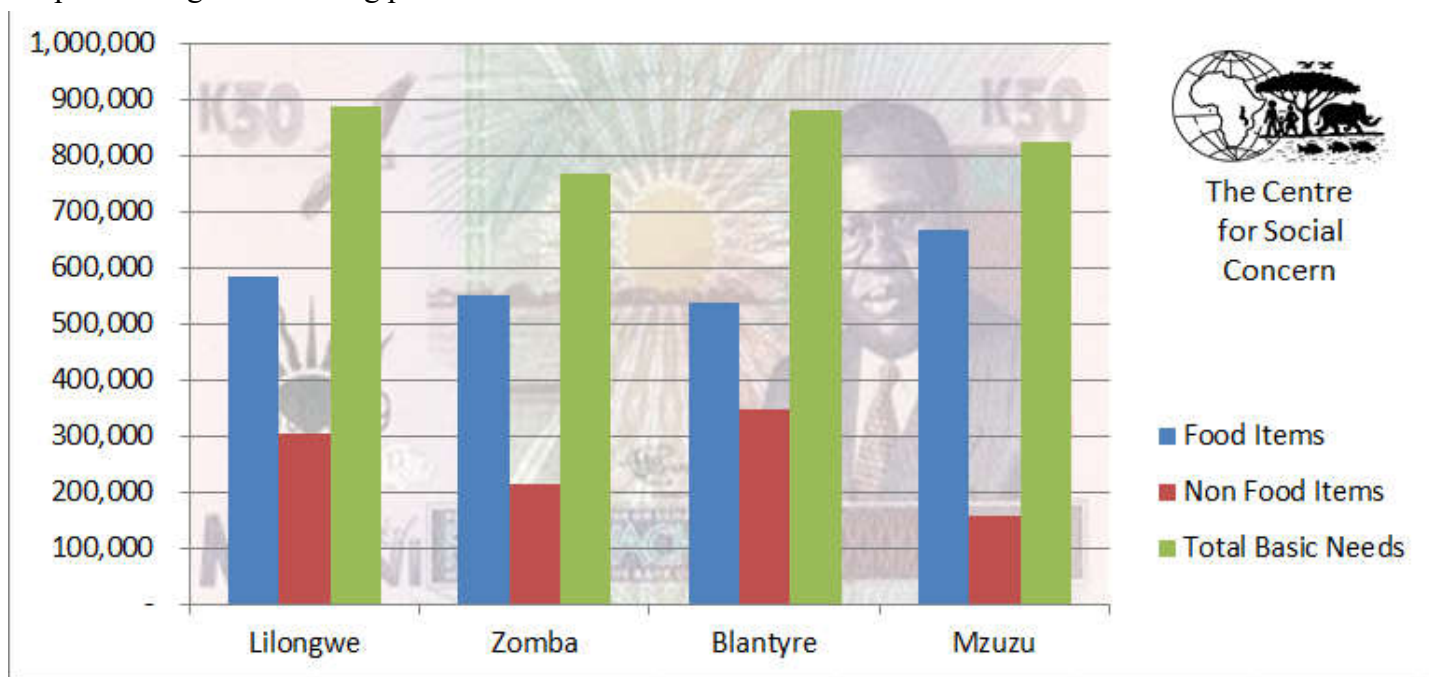
Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for March 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	80,833	161,666	Charcoal (50 kgs)	23,100	46,200
Milling (Including Grinding)	3,000	42,000	Protex	2,400	24,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	5,033	32,211	Boom	2,067	16,536
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	30,000	30,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,967	5,934
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	52,333	41,866	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,738	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	13,667	10,934	Electricity	9,387	9,387
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	8,917	35,668	Running Water (meter)	9,021	9,021
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	442	21,216	Housing (3 bedroom)	43,819	43,819
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,577	35,483	Sub-Total		155,963
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	4,687	70,305	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs		824,220
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,580	12,530			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,800	27,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	8,392	25,176	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,500	70,000	Secondary (fees) per year		93,856
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,583	28,664	Primary (GPF) per year		5,541
Kitchen Salt	3,170	3,170	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		56,708
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		81,160
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	523	8,368	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		25,068
Sub-Total		668,257	Sub-Total		262,333

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	585,035	304,684	889,719
Zomba	552,086	215,627	767,713
Blantyre	537,047	346,176	883,223
Mzuzu	668,257	155,963	824,220

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

WHEN SURVIVAL BECOMES A STRUGGLE: ADDRESSING MALAWI'S COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) continues to raise its voice on the persistent crisis facing Malawian families. The elevated cost of living remains stubbornly high and out of reach for the majority of our citizens notwithstanding the slight decline in March.

For the majority of low-income earners, who survive on daily or monthly earnings far below the cost of living, every day is a painful struggle. It means deciding between sending children to school and putting food on the table. It means compromising health, dreams, and dignity. *No human being should be forced into such heartbreaking choices.*

The soul of our nation is wounded when parents have to watch helplessly as their children go to bed hungry. Malawi, a land blessed with fertile soil, rich water bodies, and a resilient people, cannot afford to normalize this suffering. If we reflect on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—specifically Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)—and our own *Malawi Agenda 2063*, this situation becomes a clear warning: *we are far off track* from achieving an inclusive, prosperous, and self-reliant nation.

Centre for Social Concern, suggests the following short and long-term actions to Malawi Government and other stakeholders:

Short-Term Actions

Strengthen Safety Nets

Immediate support is needed through expanded and timely social cash transfers, food distribution programs, and subsidies targeting the most vulnerable households.

Market Regulation

Government must intensify efforts to stabilize maize and essential commodity prices through proper regulation and release of strategic grain reserves at affordable rates.

Promotion of Local Markets

Encourage buying locally produced food and goods to support domestic farmers and small businesses, cushioning them against economic shocks.

Long-Term Actions

Agricultural Transformation

Invest aggressively in climate-smart, resilient agriculture to improve food security and reduce dependence on rain-fed farming. Initiatives must prioritize irrigation, research, and access to affordable farm inputs. The mega-farms should move from political talks into practical implementation.

Job Creation and Industrialization

Promote small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, agro-processing, and sustainable industries to create meaningful employment opportunities, especially for the youth and women.

Investment in Renewable Energy

High energy costs contribute significantly to the cost of living. Expansion of affordable renewable energy solutions can drastically reduce production costs and support local businesses.

Education and Skills Development

Equip Malawians, especially the youth, with skills aligned to emerging sectors to enhance employability and entrepreneurship in line with Malawi's Vision 2063 Pillar 1: *Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization*, and Pillar 2: *Industrialization*.

Our Collective Responsibility

We urge individuals to practice financial prudence, support local businesses, and engage in home-based food production where possible. Communities must continue advocating for their rights to decent living conditions.

At the same time, **the government must be courageous enough to prioritize policies that promote economic inclusion and long-term food security over short-term political gains.**

Conclusion:

The cry of a hungry child echoes louder than statistics. The despair of a parent crushed by soaring costs demands urgent action. If Malawi is to fulfill its destiny as a land of prosperity, unity, and self-reliance, as envisioned in Agenda 2063, we must treat the cost of living crisis not as a passing challenge but as **a national emergency requiring both bold leadership and collective sacrifice.**

Let this moment stir our conscience. Let it ignite a movement towards a future where no Malawian has to choose between life's most basic needs.

IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION

We have temporarily suspended data collection in Karonga and Mangochi due to financial constraints on the Centre. Therefore, the February 2025 average figure quoted here (K845, 561) has been recalculated to reflect only the four cities — Mzuzu, Lilongwe, Blantyre, and Zomba. This adjustment explains the difference between the February average that appeared in the earlier report (which included Karonga and Mangochi) and the figure now appearing in the March comparison.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2025	2025	2025
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Amount (MWK)	510,720	521,936	500,154	510,634	516,377	519,763	523,648	540,353	578,843	615,138	694,653	797,908	841,219

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	K1800

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 729.31 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 19th,20th to 21st March , 2025 in the cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu

NOTE: The data on electricity, housing, water and other additional costs is collected and analyzed on quarterly basis

