



**CfSC**

# The Centre for Social Concern

## Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for June 2025



### 6.6% MONTHLY COST OF LIVING INCREASE THREATENS MALAWIAN FAMILIES: URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) is deeply alarmed by the latest data showing that the average cost of living in Malawi's four major cities—Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba, and Mzuzu—has risen from MK825,250 in May to MK880,053 in June 2025, representing a 6.6% increase in just one month.

This surge, occurring against a backdrop of economic fragility, persistent inflation, and stagnant wages, signals a deepening crisis for millions of Malawians already living on the edge.

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

For More Information Contact Us On:

**Centre for Social Concern**

P.O. Box 40049

Kanengo, Lilongwe 4

Malawi

Tel: +265 987590725

E-mail: [director@cfscmafr.org](mailto:director@cfscmafr.org)

Website: [www.cfscmafr.org](http://www.cfscmafr.org)

### Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for June 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	51,250	102,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	77,001	154,002
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,800	25,200	Protex	1,625	16,250
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,375	40,800	Boom	2,400	19,200
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	35,658	35,658	Clere Body Lotion	3,575	7,150
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	38,029	30,423	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,731	9,462
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	24,093	24,093
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	10,250	41,000	Running Water (meter)	22,491	22,491
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	494	23,712	Housing (3 bedroom)	105,980	105,980
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	989	22,253	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>358,628</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,440	36,600	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>926,249</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,253	11,386			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,938	29,070	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,163	27,489	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,238	64,760	Secondary (fees) per year		96,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	5,375	43,000	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Kitchen Salt	1,763	1,763	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		45,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	375	15,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		63,375
Cassava /potatoes (2KgX2Bkfst/)	1,063	17,008	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		31,150
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>567,621</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>238,525</b>

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

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	50,571	101,142	Charcoal (50 kgs)	46,429	92,858
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,200	16,800	Protex	2,000	20,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,114	39,130	Boom	2,414	19,312
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	37,143	37,143	Clere Body Lotion	4,357	8,714
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	35,714	28,571	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,929	11,858
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	22,418	22,418
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	18,998	18,998
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	500	24,000	Housing (3 bedroom)	85,177	85,177
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	829	18,653	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>279,335</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,957	29,355	<b>Zomba Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>801,205</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,329	4,652			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,500	22,500	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	10,829	32,487	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,000	60,000	Secondary (fees) per year		105,868
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	4,686	37,488	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,614	1,614	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		82,602
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	200	8,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		89,144
Cassava /potatoes (2KgX2Bkfst/)	771	12,336	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		36,878
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>521,870</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>323,491</b>

### Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for June 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	55,000	110,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	85,714	171,428
Milling (Including Grinding)	500	7,000	Protex	1,814	18,140
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,214	39,770	Boom	2,400	19,200
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	40,000	40,000	Clere Body Lotion	3,586	7,172
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	40,143	32,114	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,286	8,572
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	51,429	41,143	Electricity	24,880	24,880
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	8,143	32,572	Running Water (meter)	22,821	22,821
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	450	21,600	Housing (3 bedroom)	101,230	101,230
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,029	23,153	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>373,443</b>	
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,214	33,210	<b>Blantyre Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>941,994</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,071	10,749	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,486	22,290	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,557	28,671	Secondary (fees) per year		75,000
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,814	56,280	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	4,957	39,656	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		127,220
Kitchen Salt	1,200	1,200	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		100,694
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	157	6,280	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		53,525
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,429	22,864	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>359,439</b>

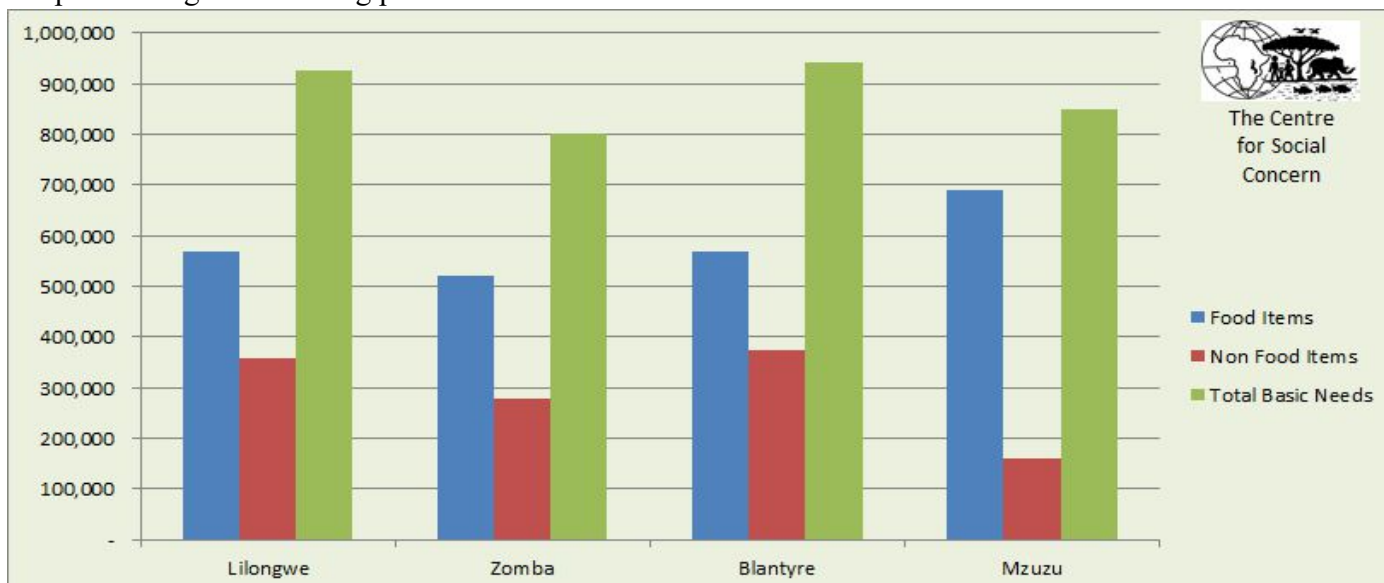
### Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for June 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	67,500	135,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	23,833	47,666
Milling (Including Grinding)	3,000	42,000	Protex	2,433	24,330
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	5,100	32,640	Boom	2,167	17,336
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	40,000	40,000	Clere Body Lotion	3,083	6,166
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	53,667	42,934	Vaseline Blue Seal	4,150	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	15,000	12,000	Electricity	9,909	9,909
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	8,529	8,529
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	542	26,016	Housing (3 bedroom)	45,461	45,461
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	2,017	45,383	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>160,463</b>	
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	3,965	59,475	<b>Mzuzu Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>850,764</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	4,347	15,215	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	2,133	31,995	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	8,832	26,496	Secondary (fees) per year		93,856
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,500	70,000	Primary (GPF) per year		5,541
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	5,133	41,064	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		56,708
Kitchen Salt	3,140	3,140	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		81,160
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		25,068
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	434	6,944	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>538,071</b>

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	567,621	358,628	926,249
Zomba	521,870	279,335	801,205
Blantyre	568,551	373,443	941,994
Mzuzu	690,301	160,463	850,764

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

## A Crisis for Malawi's Poor

Low-income and vulnerable households are bearing the brunt of this increase. Many urban and peri-urban families rely on informal, unpredictable income sources, and have seen no meaningful wage adjustment to match this rise in living costs.

The poor spend a disproportionate share—often 60–70% of their income—on food. When food prices rise sharply, they have no buffer. They are forced to eat fewer meals, sacrifice nutritional quality, or divert scarce money away from school fees, healthcare, housing, and transport.

## Commodities Driving the Surge

CfSC's monitoring shows that staple food prices are a major driver of this cost-of-living increase:

- **Maize**, the national staple, went up across most cities, with Blantyre recording a 10.8% increase (MK49,643 to MK55,000). Even in Lilongwe, prices rose above MK51,000 per 50kg bag.
- **Usipa**, a critical affordable protein source, saw extraordinary jumps—Lilongwe (+22.6%) and Mzuzu (+33.3%).
- **Tomato** prices nearly doubled in Zomba and rose sharply in Lilongwe and Blantyre.
- **Onion** prices showed erratic trends, but Mzuzu saw a significant rise.

These are not luxury goods. They are essentials for Malawian diets. Their rising prices threaten food security, health, and child nutrition.

### **More than Numbers: Human Stories of Hardship**

Behind these figures lie the daily struggles of Malawians:

- Mothers skipping meals so children can eat.
- Children sent to school without food or dropping out entirely.
- Elderly citizens unable to afford medicine because food takes priority.
- Urban workers spending more on transport as fuel prices remain high, while food costs simultaneously soar.
- Small-scale vendors and traders facing reduced sales as customers have less to spend.

### **Structural Drivers and Inequality**

This crisis is not only about poor harvests or transport costs. It reflects:

- Persistent structural inequality between rural producers and urban consumers.
- Weak market regulation that allows price speculation and profiteering.
- Heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture vulnerable to climate shocks.
- Limited investment in irrigation, storage, and processing that could stabilize supply.
- A taxation system that burdens even basic food items.
- Weak and volatile local currency

### **Long-standing Economic Fragility**

Malawi's economy continues to struggle with high inflation, a volatile currency, and mounting **public debt**. The rising cost of living is a symptom of these broader challenges—and of the limited fiscal space for social protection and public services.

Without urgent and coordinated action, we risk pushing millions of Malawians deeper into **poverty**, reversing hard-won development gains, and fueling social unrest.

### **CfSC Calls for Action: Policy Recommendations**

The Centre for Social Concern urges the Government of Malawi to treat this crisis with the seriousness it deserves and adopt short-term, mid-term, and long-term measures:

#### **Short-term measures:**

- Expand cash transfer programs urgently to the most vulnerable, ensuring they can meet food needs.
- Release and distribute maize from strategic reserves quickly and transparently to cool prices.
- Suspend or reduce taxes and fees on essential food items, fertilizers, and transport.
- Crack down on hoarding and price gouging, with improved market inspections.
- Strengthen food distribution networks to reduce urban-rural price gaps.

### **Mid-term measures:**

- **Invest in irrigation schemes and climate-smart agriculture** to stabilize food production.
- **Support smallholder farmers** with affordable inputs, training, and access to markets.
- **Develop community grain banks and better storage facilities** to limit post-harvest losses.
- **Promote urban agriculture** to reduce dependence on distant supplies.
- **Improve rural transport infrastructure** to cut distribution costs.

### **Long-term measures:**

- **Build a diversified, resilient economy** with decent, formal jobs that can lift families out of poverty.
- **Promote local agro-processing industries** to reduce dependence on imports and add value to farm produce.
- **Reform social protection systems** to provide reliable safety nets.
- **Implement sound fiscal and monetary policies** to fight inflation and stabilize the Kwacha.
- **Develop clear, pro-poor food and nutrition security policies**, with strong accountability and citizen participation.

### **Conclusion**

#### **A Moral and Development Imperative**

This cost-of-living crisis is not abstract. It is about human dignity. It is about whether Malawian families can feed their children, stay healthy, and hope for a better future.

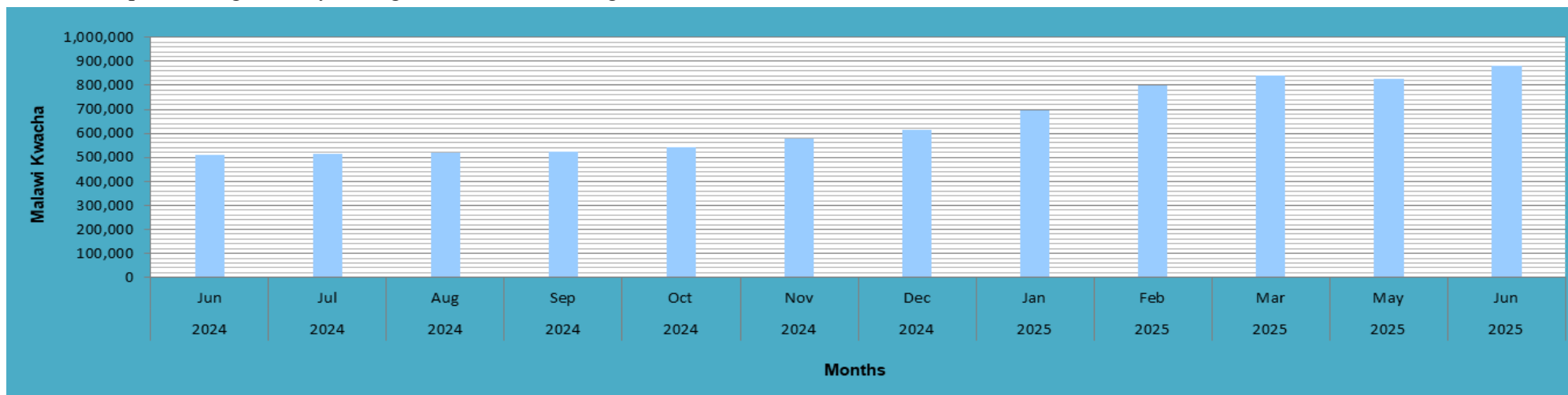
CfSC therefore calls upon the Government, Parliament, development partners, civil society, faith communities, and the private sector to join hands in urgent, sustained action.

Together, we can ensure that no Malawian goes hungry or falls deeper into poverty simply because they cannot afford the rising cost of basic needs.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025
	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	May	Jun
Amount (MWK)	510,634	516,377	519,763	523,648	540,353	578,843	615,138	694,653	797,908	841,219	825,520	880,053

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 (\$) = K1,723.30 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 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June , 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**