



CFSC BASIC NEEDS BASKET: LILONGWE, ZOMBA, BLANTYRE & MZUZU DECEMBER 2025

(A) COST OF BASIC FOOD ITEMS FOR A HOUSEHOLD SIZE OF SIX PEOPLE

ITEM	Lilongwe	Zomba	Blantyre	Mzuzu
Maize	50,625	65,225	130,450	65,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,000	1,200	16,800	500
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,063	7,571	48,454	7,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	47,479	24,286	24,286	35,714
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	39,030	35,714	28,571	43,571
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	0	51,429
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	12,000	12,000	48,000	12,286
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	513	500	24,000	500
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,645	1,729	38,903	1,243
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	3,017	1,443	21,645	3,486
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,767	1,900	6,650	2,943
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,913	1,800	27,000	1,829
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,125	9,286	27,858	9,364
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,025	3,000	60,000	2,971
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	5,100	5,100	40,800	4,914
Kitchen Salt	1,900	1,771	1,771	2,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	500	699	27,960	150
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	598	1,829	29,264	3,286
Sub-total	603,670	602,412	672,051	704,423

(B) COST OF BASIC NON- FOOD ITEMS FOR A HOUSEHOLD SIZE OF SIX PEOPLE

Charcoal (50 kgs)	56,250	112,500	0	0	103,571	207,142	46,688	93,376
Protex	2,513	25,130	2,500	25,000	1,779	17,790	3,417	34,170
Boom	5,363	42,904	2,614	20,912	2,400	19,200	2,700	21,600
Clere Body Lotion	4,088	8,176	4,343	8,686	3,600	7,200	4,333	8,666
Vaseline Blue Seal	6,063	12,126	6,314	12,628	1,307	2,614	5,525	1,066
Electricity	30,151	30,151	22,561	22,561	27,219	27,219	8,831	8,831
Running Water (meter)	15,829	15,829	16,559	16,559	25,143	25,143	7,538	7,538
Housing (3 bedroom)	106,249	106,249	87,453	87,453	94,450	94,450	49,940	49,940
Sub-total	353,065	193,799	400,758	225,187	956,735	796,211	1,072,809	929,610
Total Basic Needs	956,735	796,211	1,072,809	929,610				

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1,748.32 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source: <https://www.oanda.com> The Social Conditions Research Program of the Centre for Social Concern conducted this survey from 2nd to 4th December, 2025 in the cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu.

Centre for Social Concern, P.O. Box 40049, Lilongwe, Malawi Tel: 265-991-843-249: director@cfscmafr.org

PRESS STATEMENT

RISING COST OF LIVING PUTS PRESSURE ON HOUSEHOLDS

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) expresses serious concern over the continued rise in the cost of living in Malawi, which increased from K871, 175 in November to K938, 841 in December 2025, representing a significant month-on-month increase that is further eroding the purchasing power of households.

CfSC's analysis indicates that one of the major contributors to this increase is the rising price of maize, Malawi's staple food. In Mzuzu, the price of a 50kg bag of maize rose sharply from K57,500 in November to K64,000 in December 2025. Zomba also recorded an increase, albeit marginal, from K61,750 to K62,225 over the same period. Meanwhile, maize prices in Blantyre remained unchanged at K65,000 per 50kg in both November and December. These increases, particularly in Mzuzu and Zomba, have had a direct impact on household food security and overall living costs.

The cost of living continues to vary significantly across cities. Blantyre recorded the highest cost of living at K1,072,809, followed by Lilongwe at K956,735, while Zomba had the lowest at K796,211. Despite these differences, the general trend points to a nationwide rise in basic living expenses, disproportionately affecting low-income and vulnerable households.

CfSC further notes that the rising cost of living is strongly linked to the increased cost of agricultural inputs, including fertilizer, seed, and chemicals. These rising input costs have raised production expenses for farmers, which are ultimately passed on to consumers through higher food prices. This situation threatens both current food affordability and future food availability, particularly for smallholder farmers who already operate under constrained conditions.

In addition, the increase in Value Added Tax (VAT) from 16.5% to 17.5% has compounded the problem by raising the cost of goods and services across the economy. The VAT increase has had a cascading effect, contributing to higher prices for basic necessities and essential services, thereby intensifying the cost-of-living burden on ordinary Malawians.

The Centre for Social Concern calls on Government and relevant stakeholders to implement urgent and targeted interventions to cushion households from these rising costs. Such measures should include policies to stabilize food prices, targeted subsidies or support for agricultural inputs, and social protection mechanisms for the most vulnerable populations. CfSC also urges policymakers to carefully assess the impact of tax adjustments on household welfare, particularly in an already strained economic environment.

CfSC remains committed to monitoring cost-of-living trends and advocating for policies that promote social justice, economic fairness, and the dignity of all Malawians.