



MISEREOR
IHR HILFSWERK

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL CONCERN

THE COST-OF-LIVING REPORT FOR JANUARY 2026



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LILONGWE

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)	Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)
Maize	49,875	99,750	Charcoal (50 kgs)	93,750	187,500
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,057	28,798	Protex	2,375	23,750
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,063	38,803	Boom	2,575	20,600
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	40,248	40,248	Clere Body Lotion	3,913	7,826
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	40,418	32,334	Vaseline Blue Seal	6,063	12,126
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	-	Electricity	30,151	30,151
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	15,829	15,829
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	506	24,288	Housing (3 bedroom)	106,249	106,249
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,816	40,860		Sub-Total	404,031
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	3,260	48,900	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		1,014,753
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	4,371	15,299	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,800	27,000	EDUCATION		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,125	27,375	Secondary (fees) per year		31,923
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	3,163	63,260	Primary (GPF) per year		1,605
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	5,188	41,504	Uniform (Secondary/Primary) per year		23,350
Kitchen Salt	1,975	1,975	Shoes (Secondary/Primary) per year		16,344
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	513	20,520	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		9,166
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	738	11,808	Transport (minibus return)		18,500
				Sub-Total	100,888
Sub-Total		610, 722			

ZOMBA

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)	Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)
Maize	62,000	124,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	43,849	87,698
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,200	16,800	Protex	2,900	29,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	8,000	51,200	Boom	5,714	45,712
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	22,857	22,857	Clere Body Lotion	4,229	8,458
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	30,000	24,000	Vaseline Blue Seal	6,271	12,542
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	-	-	Electricity	22,561	22,561
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	16,559	16,559
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	517	24,816	Housing (3 bedroom)	87,453	87,453
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	2,286	51,435		Sub-Total	309,983
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,614	39,210	Zomba Total Basic Needs		928,719
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,364	11,774	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,800	27,000	EDUCATION		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,500	28,500	Secondary (fees) per year		15,153
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,750	55,000	Primary (GPF) per year		1,506
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	4,643	37,144	Uniform (Secondary/Primary) per year		17,964
Kitchen Salt	1,800	1,800	Shoes (Secondary/Primary) per year		20,770
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	680	27,200	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		5,718
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,750	28,000	Transport (minibus return)		15,500
				Sub-Total	76,611
	Sub-Total	618,736			

BLANTYRE

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)	Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)
Maize	63,750	127,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	132,143	264,286
Milling (Including Grinding)	500	7,000	Protex	2,471	24,710
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	6,714	42,970	Boom	2,414	19,312
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	40,714	40,714	Clere Body Lotion	3,314	6,628
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	54,286	43,429	Vaseline Blue Seal	1,307	2,614
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	57,143	45,714	Electricity	27,219	27,219
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	12,286	49,144	Running Water (meter)	25,143	25,143
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	507	24,336	Housing (3 bedroom)	94,450	94,450
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,486	33,435		Sub-Total	464,362
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	5,757	86,355	Blantyre Total Basic Needs		1,194,713
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	5,457	19,100	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,771	26,565	EDUCATION		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	9,236	27,708	Secondary (fees) per year		20,883
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	2,829	56,580	Primary (GPF) per year		1,825
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	4,914	39,312	Uniform (Secondary/Primary) per year		9,749
Kitchen Salt	1,914	1,914	Shoes (Secondary/Primary) per year		12,060
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	150	6,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		8,029
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	3,286	52,576	Transport (minibus return)		11,460
Sub-Total		730,351		Sub-Total	64,006

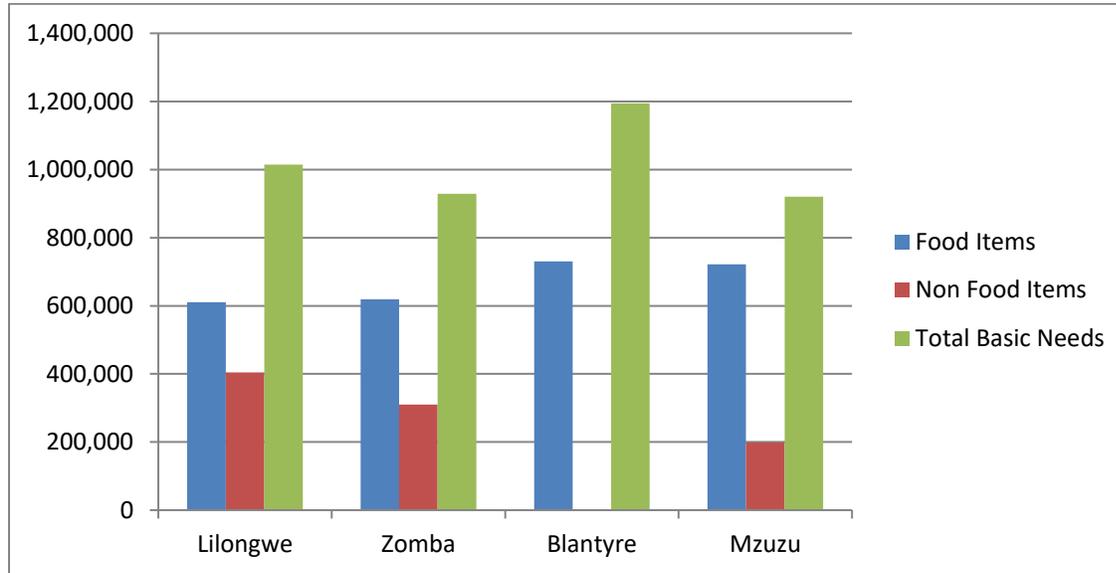
MZUZU

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)	Item	Unit Cost (MWK)	Monthly Cost (MWK)
Maize	58,333	116,667	Charcoal (50 kgs)	46,688	93,376
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,500	35,000	Protex	3,433	34,330
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	10,333	66,133	Boom	2,717	21,736
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	20,000	20,000	Clere Body Lotion	4,333	8,666
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	64,000	51,200	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,525	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	10,000	8,000	Electricity	23,492	23,492
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	14,000	56,000	Running Water (meter)	16,362	16,362
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	600	28,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	115,954	115, 954
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	2,457	55,275		Sub-Total	199,028
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	3,397	50,950	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs		920,531
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	5,050	17,675	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	2,467	37,000	EDUCATION		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	11,150	33,450	Secondary (fees) per year		30,417
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	3,500	70,000	Primary (GPF) per year		7,875
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	5,400	43,200	Uniform (Secondary/Primary) per year		9,546
Kitchen Salt	4,180	4,180	Shoes (Secondary/Primary) per year		8,864
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	400	16,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		6,063
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	748	11,973	Transport (minibus return)		10,000
	58,333	116,667			
Sub-Total		721,503		Sub-Total	72,765

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	610,722	404,031	1,014,753
Zomba	618,736	309,983	928,719
Blantyre	730,351	464,362	1,194,713
Mzuzu	721,503	199,028	920,531

Table showing cost of living per district

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

PRESS STATEMENT

COST OF LIVING SURGES BY OVER 46% IN ONE YEAR, HITTING LOW-INCOME EARNERS HARDEST

January 2025 – January 2026 Trend Analysis

Lilongwe, January 2026

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC), through its Social Conditions Research Programme, has released an analysis of the cost-of-living trends in Malawi covering the period January 2025 to January 2026, based on monthly Basic Needs Basket (BNB) data.

The findings show a sharp and sustained rise in the cost of living, placing severe pressure on low-income earners whose wages and incomes have failed to keep pace with rising prices.

In January 2025, the average cost of living stood at K694,653. This increased steadily throughout the year, reaching K841,219 in March, K896,980 in July, and K945,029 in October 2025. Although a temporary decline was recorded in November 2025 (K871,752), the relief was short-

lived. The cost rose again to K938,841 in December 2025, before reaching a record K1,014,679 in January 2026.

Overall, the cost of living increased by K320,026, representing an increase of over 46 percent within 12 months.

This trend has severely eroded the purchasing power of low-income earners, including minimum-wage workers, informal sector employees, casual labourers, and small-scale farmers. For many households, employment is no longer sufficient to meet basic needs such as food, housing, transport, education, and health care.

CfSC observes that wages, especially for low-income earners, have remained largely stagnant while prices of essential goods continue to rise. As a result, households are increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as reducing meals, cutting health and education expenses, borrowing, and selling productive assets.

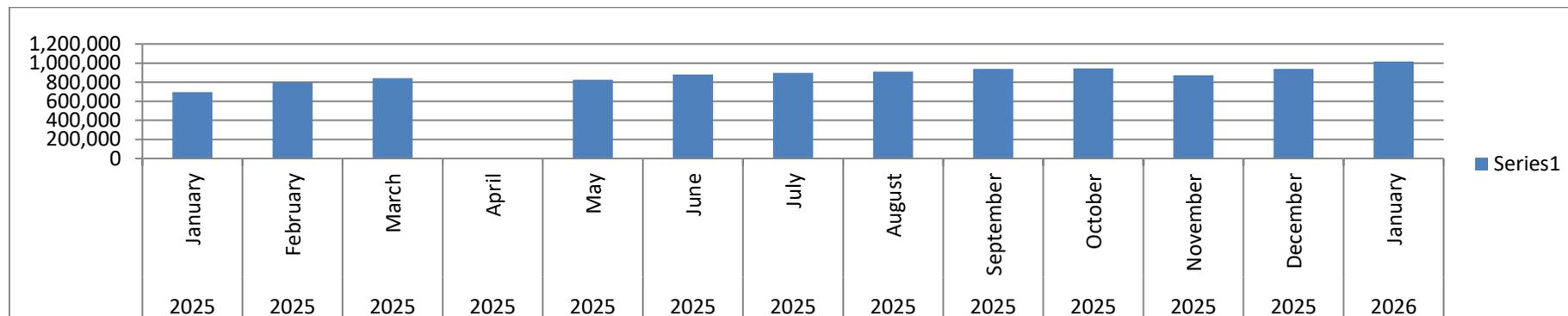
The Centre for Social Concern therefore calls on:

- Government to urgently review minimum wages and strengthen social protection programmes;
- Employers to align wages with the prevailing cost of living; and
- Policy makers to implement measures that stabilize prices of basic necessities.

CfSC warns that without urgent interventions, the cost-of-living crisis will continue to push

TREND ANALYSIS OF THE AVERAGE COST OF LIVING OVER THE YEAR

2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2026
January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January
694,653	797,908	841,219		825,529	880,053	896,980	910,131	93,8291	945,029	871,752	938,841	1,014,679



Graph Showing Cost of Living Trend Analysis from January 2025 to January 2026

Fuel Cost

Diesel per litre	<i>MK3,500</i>
Petrol per litre	<i>MK3,500</i>
Paraffin per litre	<i>MK1,920</i>

Minibus Fare

Lilongwe	<i>MK6,000</i>
Zomba	<i>MK4,000</i>
Blantyre	<i>MK4,000</i>
Mzuzu	<i>MK3,000</i>

NB: 1 USA = MK1,738.66. Malawi Kwacha. Source: <https://www.oanda.com>. The Social Conditions Research Programme of the Centre for Social Concern conducted these surveys from 7th to 8th January 2026 in the cities from the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Zomba and Mzuzu.