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

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for February 2025



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Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for February 2026

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	45,000	90,000	Charcoal (50Kg)	59,375	118,750
Milling (Including grinding)	2,857	39,998	Protex	2,488	24,880
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	6,125	39,200	Boom	2,425	19,400
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	39,978	39,978	Clere body lotion	4,125	8,250
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	29,513	23,610	Vaseline Blue Seal	6,063	12,126
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	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	500	24,000	Housing (3 bedrooms)	106,249	106,249
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,540	34,650	Sub-Total		335,635
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	1,580	23,700	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		917,845
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	5,319	18,617			
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	1,950	29,250	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	8,588	25,764	Education		
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	3,450	69,000	Secondary(fees) per year		157,500
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,400	43,200	Primary(GPF) per year		4,125
Kitchen Salt	1,963	1,963	Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		73,481
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	484	19,360	Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		56,250
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	745	11,920	Other (pens,books, etc)/term		47,127
Sub-Total		582,210	Sub-Total		338,483

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

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	52,000	104,000	Charcoal (50Kg)	25,000	50,000
Milling (Including grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	2,814	28,140
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	8,000	51,200	Boom	2,529	20,232
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	27,143	27,143	Clere body lotion	4,471	8,942
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	31,429	25,143	Vaseline Blue Seal	17,714	35,428
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	22,561	22,561
Beef (1 Kg/day) 4 days	12,286	49,144	Running Water (meter)	16,559	16,559
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	500	24,000	Housing (3 bedrooms)	87,453	87,453
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	2,057	46,283	Sub-Total		269,315
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	2,500	37,500	Zomba Total Basic Needs		878,414
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	4,114	14,399			
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	2,000	30,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	9,357	28,071	Education		
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	2,800	56,000	Secondary(fees) per year		133,812
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,000	40,000	Primary(GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,800	1,800	Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		81,740
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	621	24,840	Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		88,296
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	1,786	28,576	Other (pens,books, etc)/term		36,878
Sub-Total		609,099	Sub-Total		349,726

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

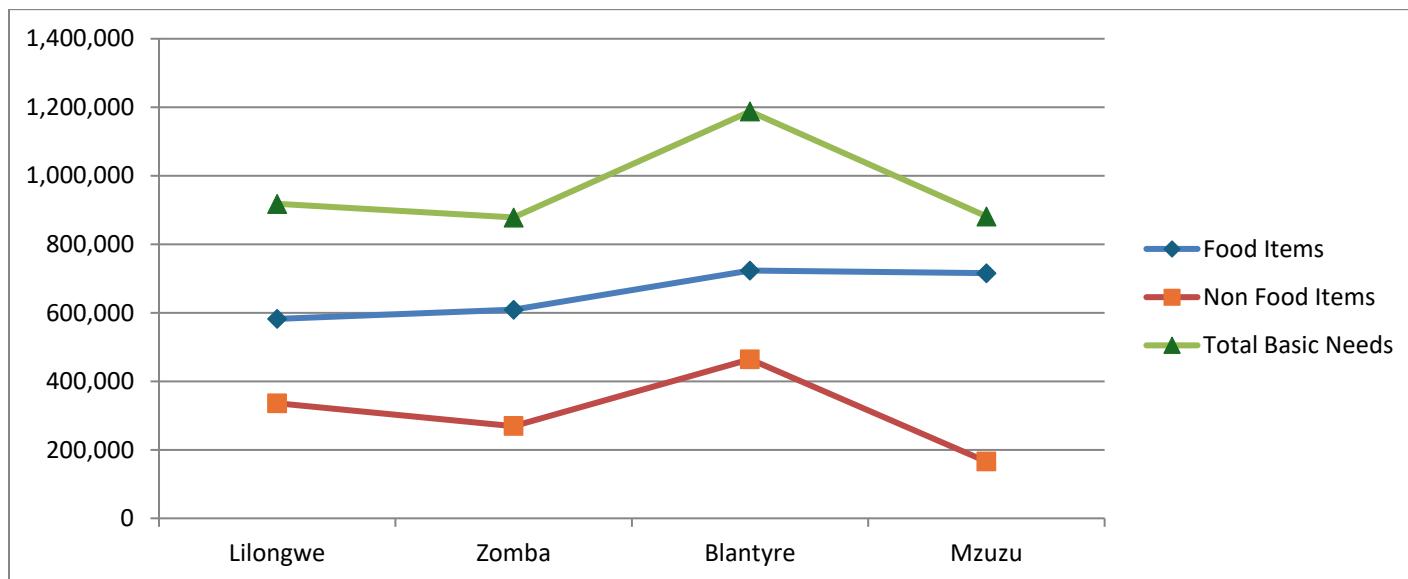
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	60,000	120,000	Charcoal (50Kg)	132,143	264,286
Milling (Including grinding)	500	7,000	Protex	2,171	24,710
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	7,000	44,800	Boom	2,414	19,312
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	40,714	40,714	Clere body lotion	3,314	6,628
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	62,857	50,286	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	500	24,000	Housing (3 bedrooms)	94,450	94,450
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,457	32,783	Sub-Total		464,362
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	4,571	68,565	Blantyre Total Basic Needs		1,187,692
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	6,500	22,750			
			C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	1,800	27,000	Education		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	9,364	28,092	Secondary(fees) per year		70,841
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	2,814	56,280	Primary(GPF) per year		4,762
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,000	40,000	Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		109,287
Kitchen Salt	1,914	1,914	Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		79,489
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	150	6,000	Other (pens,books, etc)/term		39,161
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	3,643	58,288	Sub-Total		303,540
Sub-Total		723,330	Sub-Total		303,540

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

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	45,000	90,000	Charcoal (50Kg)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including grinding)	2,833	39,662	Protex	3,433	34,330
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	10,250	65,600	Boom	2,717	21,736
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	20,000	20,000	Clere body lotion	4,333	8,666
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	64,000	51,200	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,525	11,150
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	10,000	8,000	Electricity	0	0
Beef (1 Kg/day) 4 days	14,000	65,000	Running Water (meter)	0	0
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	600	28,800	Housing (3 bedrooms)	0	0
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	3,618	81,405	Sub-Total		165,798
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	2,817	42,255	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs		881,237
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	5,023	17,581			
			C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	2,467	37,005	Education		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	10,717	32,151	Secondary(fees) per year		116,250
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	3,500	70,000	Primary(GPF) per year		1,808
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,400	43,200	Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		91,093
Kitchen Salt	4,180	4,180	Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		95,934
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	400	16,000	Other (pens,books, etc)/term		45,247
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	775	12,400	Sub-Total		350,332
Sub-Total		715,439	Sub-Total		350,332

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	582,210	335,635	917,845
Zomba	609,099	269,315	878,414
Blantyre	723,330	464,362	1,187,692
Mzuzu	715,439	165,798	881,237



Graph showing cost of living per district

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

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) has released its latest Cost of Living Analysis for February 2026. The findings show that the total cost of living for an average family has decreased from MK1, 014,679 in January to MK966,297 in February. While this decline provides slight relief, the cost of living remains significantly high and continues to place immense pressure on low-income households across Malawi.

Key Drivers of the Decrease

The reduction was largely driven by falling maize prices across major cities:

- Lilongwe: MK49,875 to MK45,000
- Zomba: MK62,000 to MK52,000
- Blantyre: MK63,750 to MK60,000
- Mzuzu: MK58,333 to MK45,000

Maize remains the country's staple food, and any price shift has a direct and immediate impact on household food security. Despite the drop, current maize prices remain far above the purchasing power of most low-income earners.

Impact on Low-Income Earners

Most low-income households depend on informal employment and earn incomes far below the required cost of living.

Even with the recent decrease, the cost of basic needs such as food, housing, transport, electricity, and water remains unaffordable for the majority.

Families continue to adopt negative coping strategies such as:

- Reducing meal frequency and portion sizes
- Withdrawing children from school due to costs
- Cutting health expenses and delaying medical care
- Increasing household debt

The continued gap between wages and the cost of living means many households remain trapped in a cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and vulnerability.

Recommendations to Government

The Centre for Social Concern urges Government to implement urgent measures to protect vulnerable households:

1. Strengthen Agricultural Support

Expand access to affordable farm inputs and invest in irrigation to stabilize maize supply and prices.

2. Review and Adjust Minimum Wages

Align minimum wage levels with the current cost of living to ensure workers can meet basic needs.

3. Expand Social Protection Programmes

Scale up cash transfers, public works programmes, and targeted food assistance for vulnerable households.

4. Stabilize Food Markets

Improve grain reserves management and strengthen price monitoring to prevent speculation and shortages.

5. Invest in Job Creation and Economic Growth

Promote small and medium enterprises and support informal sector workers with access to credit and markets.

Conclusion

While the reduction in the cost of living is a positive development, it is not sufficient to ease the burden on Low-income households. Urgent, coordinated policy action is required to ensure that economic improvements translate into real and sustainable relief for Malawian families.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025					
	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Febb
Amount (MWK)	797,908	841,219	-	825,529	880,053	896,980	910,131	938,291	945,029	871,752	938,841	1,014,679	966,297

Graph showing monthly average for the cost of living

Fuel Cost

Fuel (cost at the pump)	
Diesel (per litre)	K5,000
Petrol (per litre)	K5,000
Paraffin (per litre)	

Minibus Fare

Minibus fare to town and back	
Lilongwe	K8000
Zomba	K4000
Blantyre	K4000
Mzuzu	K 5000

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1,743.69 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 3rd to 4th February, 2026 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