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The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for June 2026



URBAN COST OF LIVING CONTINUES TO RISE BEYOND THE REACH OF MOST MALAWIANS.

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) notes with alarm that the average cost of living, as measured by the Basic Needs Basket (BNB), increased from MK987,844 in May 2026 to MK1,031,151 in June 2026. This represents an increase of MK43,307, or approximately 4.38 percent. Among the four cities monitored, Blantyre recorded the highest cost of living, followed by Mzuzu, Lilongwe, and Zomba. Compared to the previous month, Blantyre and Mzuzu continue to record the highest cost of living among the four cities.

Although maize remains the country's staple food, the Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) observed mixed price trends across the cities. The price of maize remained unchanged in Zomba, increased slightly in Blantyre, and declined in both Lilongwe and Mzuzu. These trends suggest that while maize is an important component of household expenditure and a contributor to inflation, it was not the primary driver of the increase in the cost of living during the reporting period. Instead, the rise in the Basic Needs Basket was largely driven by increases in the prices of other essential food and non-food commodities, including eggs, dried fish, cooking oil, utilities, and house rentals.

The continued increase in the cost of living for a family of six highlights the worsening economic hardships faced by households, forcing many to live below a decent standard of

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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

Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for June 2026					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	31,250	62,500	Charcoal (50Kg)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including grinding)	3,000	42,000	Protex	2,588	25,880
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	4,938	31,603	Boom	2,650	21,200
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	43,849	43,849	Clere body lotion	3,775	7,550
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	38,463	30,770	Vaseline Blue Seal	6,488	12,976
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	29,140	29,140
Beef (1 Kg/day) 4 days	14,000	56,000	Running Water (meter)	12,633	12,633
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	569	27,312	Housing (3 bedrooms)	126,484	126,484
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,550	34,875	Sub-Total		335,863
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	4,211	63,165	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		959,256
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	6,238	21,833			
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	1,913	28,695	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	8,938	26,814	Education		
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	3,570	70,000	Secondary(fees) per year		
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,700	45,600	Primary(GPF) per year		
Kitchen Salt	1,856	1,856	Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	563	22,520	Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)year		
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	875	14,000	Other (pens,books, etc)/term		
Sub-Total		623,393	Sub-Total		

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for June 2026					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	36,000	72,000	Charcoal (50Kg)	31,691	63,382
Milling (Including grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	2,857	28,570
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	6,571	42,054	Boom	2,557	20,456
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	30,000	30,000	Clere body lotion	3,800	7,600
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	32,857	26,286	Vaseline Blue Seal	6,929	13,858
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	24,475	24,475
Beef (1 Kg/day) 4 days	14,000	56,000	Running Water (meter)	19,319	19,319
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	558	26,784	Housing (3 bedrooms)	108,845	108,845
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	2,171	48,848	Sub-Total		286,505
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	3,086	46,290	Zomba Total Basic Needs		860,017
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	3,071	10,749			
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	1,800	27,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	9,114	27,342	Education		
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	2,767	55,340	Secondary(fees) per year		
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,500	44,000	Primary(GPF) per year		
Kitchen Salt	1,771	1,771	Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	614	24,560	Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	843	13,488	Other (pens,books, etc)/term		
Sub-Total		573,512	Sub-Total		

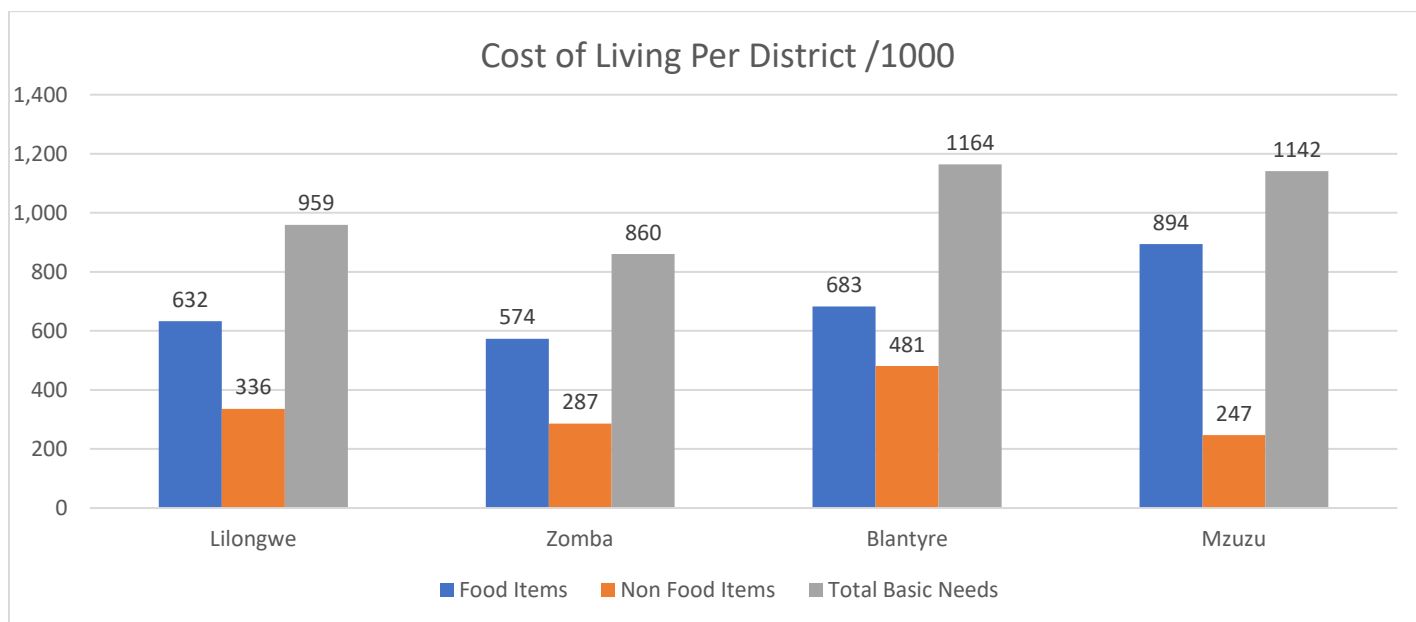
Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for June 2026						
A. FOOD ITEMS				B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	35,000	70,000		Charcoal (50Kg)	132,143	264,286
Milling (Including grinding)	2,500	35,000		Protex	2,600	26,000
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	5,429	34,746		Boom	2,500	20,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	42,857	42,857		Clere body lotion	3,900	7,800
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	60,000	48,000		Vaseline Blue Seal	1,307	2,614
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	59,286	47,429		Electricity	26,722	26,722
Beef (1 Kg/day) 4 days	12,286	49,144		Running Water (meter)	25,569	25,569
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	500	24,000		Housing (3 bedrooms)	108,191	108,191
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,171	26,348		Sub-Total		481,182
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	5,471	82,065		Blantyre Total Basic Needs		1,163,777
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	7,186	25,151				
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys	1,971	29,565		C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys	9,271	27,813		Education		
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days	3,171	63,420		Secondary(fees) per year		
Sugar (2Kgs/week)	5,071	40,568		Primary(GPF) per year		
Kitchen Salt	1,914	1,914		Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	150	6,000		Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)	1,786	28,576		Other (pens,books, etc)/term		
Sub-Total		682,595		Sub-Total		

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for June 2026					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	41,717	83,434	Charcoal (50Kg)	95,833	191,666
Milling (Including grinding)	4,167	58,338	Protex	3,483	34,830
Beans(0.8Kg/day) 8 days	12,692	81,229	Boom	2,767	22,136
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	29,000	29,000	Clere body lotion	4,417	8,834
Dry Utaka (200g/day) 4 days	76,667	61,334	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,525	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	24,167	19,334	Electricity	9,321	9,321
Beef (1 Kg/day) 4 days	14,000	56,000	Running Water (meter)	7,843	7,843
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	592	28,416	Housing (3 bedrooms)	48,428	48,428
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	4,348	97,830	Sub-Total		247,236
Tomato (0.5Kg/day) 30 days	4,233	63,495	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs		1,141,552
Onion (116g/day) for 30 days	3,950	13,825			
Fresh milk(250mls/day)30 dys			C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kukoma Oil(100mls) for 30dys			Education		
Bread (5 bkfs/wk) for 20 days			Secondary(fees) per year		
Sugar (2Kgs/week)			Primary(GPF) per year		
Kitchen Salt			Uniform/Shoes(primary)/year		
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)			Uniform/Shoes(Secondary)/year		
Cassava/Potatoes(2Kgs/Bkfs)			Other (pens,books, etc)/term		
Sub-Total			894,314		Sub-Total

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	632,393	335,863	959,256
Zomba	573,512	286,505	860,017
Blantyre	682,595	481,182	1,163,777
Mzuzu	894,314	247,236	1,141,552

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

1. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING

The increase in the cost of living was mainly driven by rising prices of several key food commodities and essential household necessities.

- Fluctuations of the US dollar:** Malawi continues to experience a shortage of foreign exchange reserves, forcing traders to rely on the parallel (black) market for foreign currency. As a result, the prices of goods have become unstable.
- Increase in rental prices:** Housing costs have increased due to several factors, including (1) a shortage of houses in urban areas, and (2) landlords raising rental prices in response to rising living costs.
- Electricity and water bills:** Monthly utility costs for water and electricity have increased in most households, thereby raising the minimum cost of living.
- Charcoal, Protex, and Boom detergent soap:** Prices of these items have increased across most markets.
- Increase in food prices:** The increase in the cost of living was also driven by rising prices of food items such as dried utaka, dried usipa, eggs, onions, kapenta, and cooking oil.

2. EFFECTS OF THE HIGH COST OF LIVING ON LOW-INCOME EARNERS IN URBAN AREAS.

The rising cost of living is making everyday life increasingly difficult for many people, particularly low-income households that are already struggling to meet their basic needs. While the prices of goods and services continue to increase, wages and household incomes have remained largely unchanged, placing families under growing financial pressure. As a result, low-income households are facing several challenges, including:

- . Increased Food Insecurity**

Many households can no longer afford a balanced diet and are forced to reduce the frequency, quantity, and diversity of their meals, increasing the risk of malnutrition.

- . Reduced Purchasing Power**

Wages and incomes have not kept pace with the rising cost of living. Consequently, many families are unable to meet their basic needs despite being employed.

- . Growth in Household Debt**

Households increasingly rely on borrowing from friends, relatives, savings groups, and money lenders to survive.

- . Reduced Access to Education**

Parents are finding it difficult to pay school fees, purchase uniforms, and meet other educational expenses, resulting in increased absenteeism and school dropouts.

- . Poor Health Outcomes**

Financial constraints often force families to delay seeking medical treatment or to forgo purchasing prescribed medicines.

- . Increased Vulnerability and Poverty**

Rising living costs compel many households to sell productive assets, reducing their future income-generating capacity and trapping them in a cycle of poverty.

3. STRATEGIES THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI SHOULD IMPLEMENT

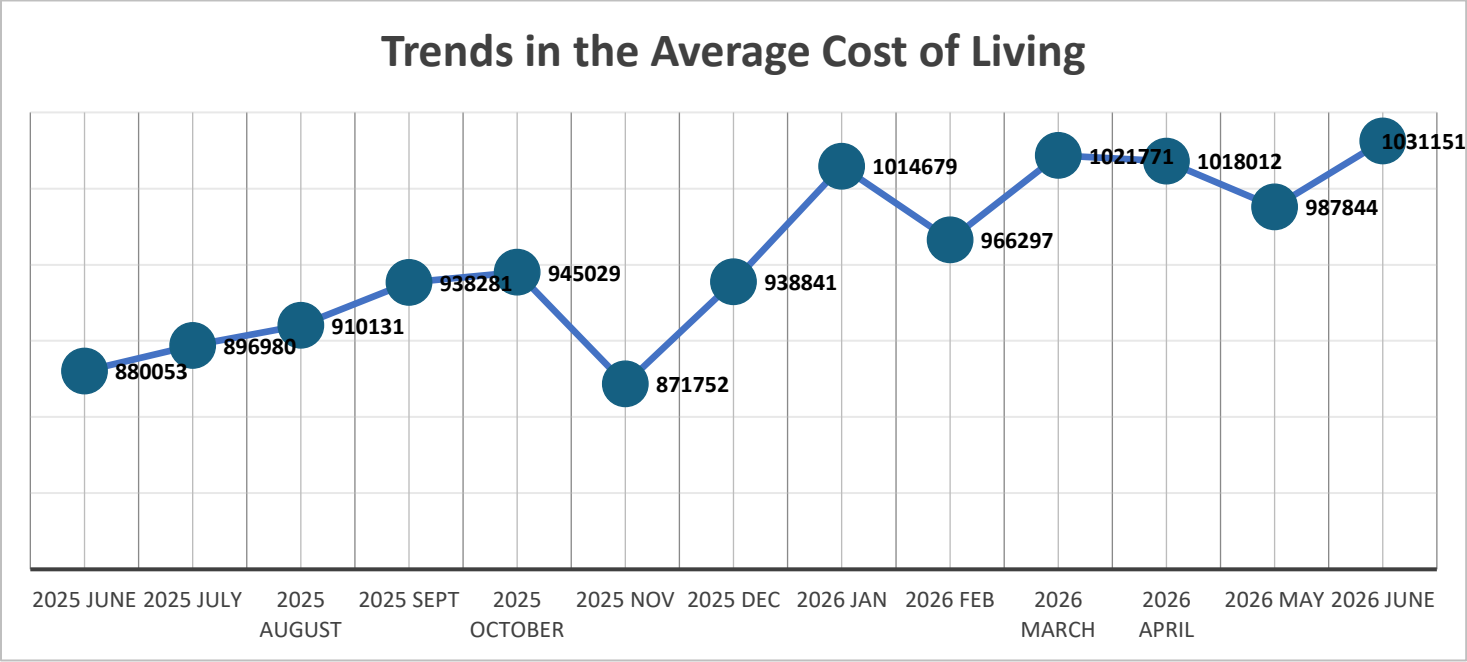
To sustainably reduce the cost of living and improve household welfare, the Government of Malawi should consider implementing the following measures:

- . Increase the supply of affordable housing by strengthening the Malawi Housing Corporation and promoting public-private partnerships to construct affordable housing in major urban centres, thereby helping to stabilize rental prices.
- . Support local industries and domestic production by creating a conducive business environment, improving access to finance, and promoting the production and export of value-added products to reduce dependence on imports and strengthen foreign exchange earnings.
- . Promote affordable alternative energy sources, such as solar power, through incentives and subsidies to reduce household dependence on grid electricity and charcoal, thereby lowering household energy costs.
- . Stabilize inflation and the exchange rate by strengthening foreign exchange management, increasing export earnings, implementing measures to curb the parallel foreign exchange market, and promoting transparent currency trading.
- . Expand social protection programmes by increasing cash transfers, public works programmes, and other targeted assistance to cushion vulnerable households against the rising cost of living.
- . Introduce or expand school feeding programmes in urban public schools to improve food security among children from low-income households and reduce the financial burden on families.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly average	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026
	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Amount (MWK)	880,053	896,980	910,131	938,281	945,029	871,752	938,841	1,014,679	966,297	1,021,771	1,018,012	987,844	1,031,151

Graph showing monthly average for the cost of living



Fuel Cost

Fuel (cost at the pump)	
Diesel (per litre)	K6,306
Petrol (per litre)	K5,619
Paraffin (per litre)	K4,771

Minibus Fare

Minibus fare to town and back	
Lilongwe	K10,000
Zomba	K6000
Blantyre	K6000
Mzuzu	K 6000

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1,738.89 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 2nd, 3rd, and 4th June, 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