

Assessment Mission Report

Earthquake Affected Areas in Mandalay Region, Myanmar

ILO Liaison Office

Assessment Team Members:

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1. Executive Summary

Purpose: This report details the findings of a rapid assessment mission undertaken by an ILO team to Kyaukse, Myitthar, and Mandalay townships in the Mandalay Region of Myanmar from April 9th to 11th, 2025. The primary objective was to observe the immediate impact of the recent earthquake, understand the conditions of the affected population, identify urgent humanitarian and early recovery needs, and gather information to inform potential ILO response strategies, particularly concerning livelihoods and vulnerable workers.

Key Findings: The assessment revealed significant and widespread damage to residential buildings, infrastructure (roads, bridges, schools, religious buildings), and commercial properties across the visited areas. Kyaukse town experienced severe destruction, with an estimated 10-20% of buildings damaged or collapsed, including tragic loss of life at a nursery school. Myitthar township, still recovering from recent floods, suffered further significant housing damage and loss of life. Mandalay city also showed visible severe damages, particularly in grassroots communities like Kannar and Sein Pan Wards, where displacement is high and living conditions in temporary sites are precarious. A critical observation across all locations was a reported disconnect between the presence of authorities and the actual receipt of assistance by many affected families, who rely heavily on relatives or self-managed, inadequate temporary shelters. Access restrictions were reported for certain areas, particularly in the Sagaing region, potentially hindering wider relief efforts. Economic impacts are severe, including loss of homes, businesses, employment, and savings, compounded by high costs for debris removal and potential reconstruction.

Priority Needs: Immediate needs include safe temporary shelter, food, clean drinking water, sanitation facilities (toilets), basic healthcare, and psychosocial support. Short-term income support is crucial for those who lost livelihoods. Medium-to-long-term needs encompass housing repair and reconstruction assistance, livelihood recovery and employment generation opportunities (potentially through cash-for-work programmes related to debris clearance and rebuilding), and support for children's return to education once conditions allow.

Initial Recommendations: The ILO could consider immediate support through partners for basic needs where feasible. Exploring possibilities for cash-for-work programmes focused on debris removal and income support. Further assessment is needed to understand the specific impacts on different worker groups (e.g., informal workers, wage labourers). Collaboration with local community organizations are essential for effective aid delivery.

2. Introduction

Background

On 28 March 2025, an earthquake of 7.7 magnitude struck in Sagaing, Myanmar, significantly impacting areas within the Mandalay and Sagaing Regions. This report focuses on the effects observed in Kyaukse, Myitthar, and Mandalay townships within the Mandalay Region. These areas sustained considerable damage to infrastructure and housing, resulting in loss of life, injuries, displacement, and disruption of livelihoods. The disaster occurred during a significant religious period (Ramadan), impacting community gatherings and response capacities.

Objectives: The ILO assessment mission aimed to:

1. Conduct a rapid visual assessment of the scale and nature of earthquake damage in selected accessible locations.
2. Engage directly with affected individuals and community leaders to understand their immediate situation, coping mechanisms, and priority needs.
3. Identify specific vulnerabilities and impacts on livelihoods, employment, and local economies.
4. Gather preliminary information to guide potential ILO interventions focused on humanitarian support and early recovery, aligning with the ILO's mandate on decent work and social protection.
5. Assess the operational environment, including accessibility and coordination aspects.

Scope and Limitations: This assessment was conducted over three days (9-11 April 2025) and focused on accessible areas within Kyaukse, Myitthar, and Mandalay townships. The methodology relied primarily on direct observation and semi-structured interviews with available community members and leaders. Due to time constraints and the rapid nature of the assessment, engagement with formal authorities was limited, and data collection was not exhaustive but indicative. Access to some severely affected areas, particularly in the Sagaing region, was reported as restricted, limiting the scope of direct observation beyond the Mandalay Region. The assessment provides a snapshot of the situation twelve days post-earthquake.

3. Methodology

- **Assessment Approach:** A qualitative rapid assessment methodology was employed.
- **Data Collection Tools:**
 - **Direct Observation:** Visual inspection of damage to buildings (residential, commercial, public, religious), infrastructure (roads, bridges), and temporary shelter sites. Observation of community activities and immediate response efforts.
 - **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Informal conversations and collecting voices were conducted with affected individuals, families, and community leaders to gather first-hand accounts of their experiences, losses, immediate needs, coping strategies, and perceptions of the aid response.
- **Stakeholders Consulted:**
 - Affected individuals and families (including homeowners, renters, bereaved families, vulnerable groups like the elderly and widows).
 - Community leaders (informal).

- An independent community outreach worker supported by the ILO TRIANGLE Programme (in Mandalay).
- Areas Visited:
 - Kyaukse Township: Traversed the town center, observed damage to various structures including residential buildings, religious sites, schools (including the collapsed nursery), and the train station.
 - Myitthar Township: Visited affected areas within the town, including the residence of an ILO staff member's family, and engaged with community members who received direct ILO staff support. Also met with community leaders from Ka Thae Kone Village nearby Myitthar.
 - Mandalay City: Visited sites of major damage (Sky Villa Condominium, Greatwall Hotel - observed from a distance due to access restrictions). Conducted detailed visits to affected communities in Kannar Ward (near Gaw Wein Jetty) and Sein Pan Ward, including temporary displacement sites. Observed displacement camps near Mandalay Zarat. Traversed areas en route via the old highway (Wan Twin, Meiktila).

4. Findings

4.1 Travel and Accessibility:

- The journey from Yangon via the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway (AH1) indicated mostly minor road damage (cracks). However, significant bridge damage was observed at mile marker 165. We observed ongoing repairing work.
- Catering services along the expressway (rest stops, restaurants, fuel stations) are available.
- Internet and mobile phone connections are very poor and unreliable.
- . Hotels have recovered services in downtown Mandalay.

4.2 Kyaukse Township:

- Visual assessment indicated substantial damage, estimated at 10-20% of buildings affected (ranging from severe cracks to total collapse). Multi-story concrete buildings appeared particularly vulnerable.
- Damage was widespread, affecting residential homes, businesses, (fabric shop mentioned), religious buildings (mosques), and public infrastructure (train station, schools).
- A stark contrast was observed between an official "Emergency Shelter" banner and donation ceremony (attended by luxury vehicles, suggesting official/business community presence) at the City Hall, and reports from affected locals who stated they had received no official support and were sheltering with relatives or friends.
- Testimony Highlight (ILO Staff - Han Win's Relative): This account vividly illustrates the devastating personal and economic impact:

A four-story building, which served as both a family residence and a business selling fabric and clothes, completely collapsed during the earthquake, resulting in the tragic loss of seven lives, including family members, staff, and customers. The aftermath has placed an extreme financial burden on the affected household, with ongoing debris removal costing MMK 100,000 per hour for machinery, alongside high expenses for labor and truck rentals, efforts

that have continued for over a week. Due to the high demand for cleaning and removing debris from various locations and buildings, there is a shortage of daily wage workers, resulting in high wage costs. Basic services remain unavailable, as electricity has been out since the incident, and residents face heightened security concerns due to the increased risk of robbery at night.

4.3 Myitthar Township:

- Myitthar Township suffered significant damage, compounding the hardship from recent severe floods in 2024, exacerbating the challenges faces by the community. 465 households were reportedly affected, with six fatalities confirmed locally. Damage ranged from severe cracking to complete destruction across six wards of the Township area.
- Authorities reportedly collected damage data, but tangible support had not reached many affected families encountered by the team.
- ILO staff facilitated a direct, personal donation of MMK 500,000 each to 14 affected households in the communities severely affected by the earthquake. (13 families in Myitthar and one family in Kyaukse)
- Testimony Highlights:
 - Ma Tu (Widow): House severely cracked and uninhabitable, forced to sleep outdoors in harsh conditions (hot ground), despair over inability to rebuild after previous flood losses. Expressed gratitude for ILO support in the absence of other aid.
 - Daw Nyunt Yee (87 years old): Narrowly escaped injury during the quake, deeply traumatized, displaced to son's house, unable to repair her home. Thankful for ILO presence.
 - U Myint Thein (Lost wife): Wife killed by falling debris while outside. Expressed gratitude for ILO support during bereavement.
 - Family of Four Elderly Siblings: Illustrates extreme vulnerability, multiple health issues (cancer, blindness, mobility impairment), sole elderly caregiver working in farming, house rendered unsafe, received official notice requiring self-funded demolition within a week despite lacking resources. Highlights bureaucratic hurdles compounding personal tragedy. The notice was dated April 3rd, 2025 from the Township Natural Disaster Management Committee.
- Ka Thae Kone Village (Near Myitthar): Reports indicated collapse of two schools, a pagoda, and a monastery. Significant agricultural impact reported, including damage to farmland (large cracks) and loss of water sources/streams. Increased presence of venomous snakes and scorpions reported. Secondary impact noted on a relative in Sagaing (home damaged, displaced, hospital damaged requiring patients transfer to Kyaukse or Pyin Oo Lwin).

4.4 Mandalay City:

- Visible earthquake damage was observed in the city. Access to major collapse sites like Sky Villa Condominium and Greatwall Hotel was blocked, though response teams (rescue, security, mobile clinic, officials) were present at the Sky Villa site.
- Assessment facilitated by an ILO-supported community worker revealed extensive impact in these grassroots communities at Kannar Ward & Sein Pan Ward. Approximately half of the houses observed were severely damaged and uninhabitable.

- Large-scale displacement observed, with residents sleeping outdoors on platforms or monastery grounds.
- Temporary shelter conditions are extremely poor: inadequate shelter materials (plastic sheets/tarpaulins on the ground), overcrowding (approx. 200 households/500 people per site observed), insufficient sanitation (only one toilet seen at one site), lack of safe drinking water, and vulnerability to weather (rain).
- Severe economic impact: Residents are predominantly low-income workers who have lost both homes and jobs/income sources due to the earthquake. Some reported employers withholding wages post-disaster. There is a high dependency on external aid for both short-term survival and long-term recovery.
- Over the week, emergency private donations of lunch boxes are decreasing, and locals are trying to survive with limited donation to support communal kitchen.

Hundreds of displaced people were also observed sheltering in community spaces near Mandalay Zarat.

4.5 Healthcare and Wider Context:

- A JICA-supported hospital and a Russian hospital in Mandalay were noted as providing medical treatment (JICA reportedly seeing 500 patients/day approx. Available since 10 days post-quake).
- Access challenges for rescue and aid teams to Sagaing were reiterated, linked to perceived political affiliations of affected areas.

4.6 Return Journey Observations:

- Travel via the old highway showed damage in Wan Twin (public textile factory severely damaged) and minor damage in Meiktila. Time constraints prevented detailed stops.

5. Analysis and Discussion

This rapid assessment highlights several critical issues:

- **Severity and Geographic Spread:** The earthquake caused significant damage across multiple townships, impacting urban centers, towns, and rural villages. Vulnerability appears high in structures not built to seismic standards, particularly multi-story concrete buildings.
- **Humanitarian Crisis:** There is an acute humanitarian situation, particularly regarding shelter, water, sanitation, and food security for displaced populations, especially in densely populated low-income areas like Kannar and Sein Pan Wards in Mandalay. There are many other places that the team didn't able to visit due to time constraint.
- **Gap in Aid Delivery:** A recurring theme was the perceived lack of timely and adequate assistance reaching affected individuals, despite some visible official presence or events. This suggests potential gaps in coordination, resource allocation, or distribution mechanisms. The reliance on personal networks (relatives) or self-managed, inadequate shelters is widespread.
- **Compounding Vulnerabilities:** The earthquake has hit communities already facing hardship, such as those in Myitthar recently impacted by flooding. Pre-existing vulnerabilities related to age, health (disability, illness), gender (widows), and poverty

are significantly exacerbated. The testimony of the elderly siblings facing a demolition order starkly illustrates systemic challenges.

- **Economic Shock:** The earthquake represents a major economic shock. Loss of housing (a primary asset), business closures, job losses, withheld wages, and the high cost of debris removal and potential rebuilding threaten to push many families deeper into poverty and debt. Agricultural damage adds another layer of economic stress.
- **Psychosocial Impact:** The trauma of the event, loss of life, injury, loss of homes, and ongoing uncertainty is palpable. The testimony from survivors indicates significant fear and distress, highlighting a need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).
- **Accessibility:** ILO mission has accessed to both key cities of Sagaing and Mandalay.
- **Need for Labour-Intensive Recovery:** The sheer volume of debris and damaged structures points towards a need for significant clean-up and rebuilding efforts, presenting potential opportunities for labour-intensive recovery programmes (e.g., cash-for-work) if properly managed.

6. Identified Priority Needs

Based on observations and interviews, the following priority needs were identified:

Short-Term / Immediate (Life-Saving & Stabilization):

- **Shelter:** Safe, weather-proof temporary shelter solutions (tents, emergency shelter kits, support for host families).
- **WASH:** Access to safe drinking water, sufficient sanitation facilities (latrines), and hygiene promotion.
- **Food Security:** Emergency food assistance or cash/vouchers for food purchase.
- **Healthcare:** Access to basic healthcare, first aid, and continuity of care for chronic conditions.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Basic MHPSS for affected individuals, particularly children, elderly, and bereaved families.
- **Income Support:** Short-term cash assistance or cash-for-work opportunities for immediate needs.

Medium- to Long-Term (Early Recovery & Reconstruction):

- **Housing:** Technical assistance and financial support for repairing damaged homes and reconstructing destroyed ones, potentially utilizing disaster-resilient techniques. Support for navigating demolition requirements where applicable.
- **Livelihoods & Employment:** Restoration of livelihoods through support to small businesses, agriculture, and employment generation schemes (including skills training relevant to reconstruction). Addressing issues like unpaid wages.
- **Education:** Support for repairing/rebuilding damaged schools and ensuring children can return to education safely.
- **Infrastructure:** Repair of community infrastructure (roads, bridges, water systems).

7. Initial Recommendations for ILO

The following initial recommendations are proposed:

1. **Information Sharing & Coordination:** Share this report's findings with relevant humanitarian cluster and coordination bodies to contribute to the overall situational picture and advocate for needs, particularly in less visible communities like Kannar and Sein Pan Wards.

2. **Explore Cash-Based Interventions:** Investigate the feasibility of implementing or supporting cash-for-work programmes focused on debris removal, salvage operations, and minor infrastructure repair. This could provide immediate income while contributing to recovery efforts, aligning with ILO's Decent Work principles. Target vulnerable households identified during the assessment.
3. **Livelihoods Impact Assessment:** Conduct a more focused follow-up assessment on the specific impacts on different categories of workers (informal sector, wage employees, specific trades) and key local economic sectors to inform targeted livelihood recovery strategies.
4. **Support Vulnerable Groups:** Prioritize interventions that support the most vulnerable groups identified (elderly, disabled, women-headed households, families who lost primary earners). This could include targeted cash assistance, ensuring their inclusion in broader aid programmes, and advocacy for their specific needs (e.g., support for the elderly family facing demolition).
5. **Advocacy & Partnership:** Engage local community leaders and social partners to advocate for equitable aid distribution and access to affected areas (including Sagaing). Explore partnerships with local CSOs or community networks already active on the ground for potential implementation.
6. **Monitor Labour Issues:** Monitor the situation regarding forced labour, child labour issues, which had been concerning in the country context of Myanmar.

8. Conclusion

The assessment mission confirmed that the recent earthquake has caused severe devastation and humanitarian need in the visited areas of Mandalay Region. The significant gaps exist in reaching many affected populations, particularly vulnerable groups and those in less accessible communities. Urgent needs for shelter, WASH, food, and income are paramount. The ILO has a potential role in contributing to the early recovery phase, particularly through interventions focused on livelihoods, employment generation (cash-for-work), and supporting vulnerable workers, while coordinating closely with the broader humanitarian response. Further assessment and careful partnership building will be crucial for effective intervention.