

Wayanad

Benoy Peter and Vishnu Narendran

Labour Migration to Kerala



Savanan R.S.

Most of the construction activities in the district are clustered around Kalpetta, Sulthanbathery and Mananthavady.

The district consists of Mananthavady, Vythiri and Sulthanbathery taluks. Wayanad is an agrarian economy. Coffee, tea, cardamom, pepper, ginger and arecanut constitute the majority of the plantations. Hospitality sector is the other major employment contributor. This sector is more dependent on migrant labour compared to the plantation sector. However, both significantly rely on migrant labour. The resorts, hotels and restaurants here engage workers mainly from northeastern Indian states. Construction is another sector dependent on migrant labour. The plywood factories at Panamaram and Tharuvana areas in Mananthavady taluk depend on migrant labourers from West Bengal and Assam. Some of the units get labourers supplied through contractors in Ernakulam district. Cement brick units, brick kilns and quarries also depend on migrant workers. Anjukunnu, Kundala, Tharuvana and Panamaram are some of the major pockets where brick kilns are clustered. Workers in brick kilns are predominantly from West Bengal, Assam and Bihar. Other industries also employ migrant workers; for example, a footwear unit in Kalpetta and a chemical manufacturing unit in Sulthanbathery engage workers from other states. Vijaya Talkies junction in Kalpetta, Sathramkunnu junction in Sulthanbathery and the traffic circle close to Meenangadi police station are some of the major *nakas*. Emily Road in Kalpetta and Panamaram in Mananthavady are the major migrant pockets identified in the district. A lot of workers from Karnataka were found sleeping on the pavements at night.

Hospitality

Vythiri, Sulthanbathery and Kalpetta are the major tourist hot spots, and hotels and resorts are concentrated in these three towns. There are resorts in the interiors of the district as well. All these facilities operate with the support of migrant workers. From reception to kitchen, migrant workers are employed. Most of the migrant workers are from West Bengal, Manipur, Assam as well as Bihar in India,

and also from Nepal. Darjeeling in West Bengal, Barpeta in Assam and Ukhrul and Bishnupur in Manipur are some of the major source districts. Migrants stay at their workplaces or in hostels provided by the employer. Though the majority are men, migrant women also work in this sector.

Plantations

Plantations in Wayanad engage migrant workers heavily. Unlike Idukki where there is a significant presence of migrants from eastern Indian states, majority of the workers in Wayanad are from Karnataka. However, there are also workers from West Bengal and Assam. Workers from Karnataka are predominantly from Chamarajanagar and Mysuru districts neighbouring Wayanad. Their presence was more prominent in Sulthanbathery taluk. Labourers from the neighbouring Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu also work in the farms in Wayanad. At the same time, hundreds of tribal workers from Wayanad migrate seasonally to Kodagu and Shivamogga districts in Karnataka to work in the ginger farms run by Malayalies.

Construction

Most of the construction activities in the district are clustered around Kalpetta, Sulthanbathery and Mananthavady. Stringent environmental laws and restrictions in Wayanad have kept the sector relatively dormant. Masons here are mostly from West Bengal and Assam; flooring, painting and other such activities are mainly done by workers from Rajasthan, Bihar and Odisha. Most workers from West Bengal are from Murshidabad, Nadia and South 24 Parganas districts. Workers from Dholpur district in Rajasthan, Kalahandi, Kendrapara and Sambalpur in Odisha, and Bhagalpur and Kishanganj in Bihar can also be found here. Majority of the workers are single male migrants.

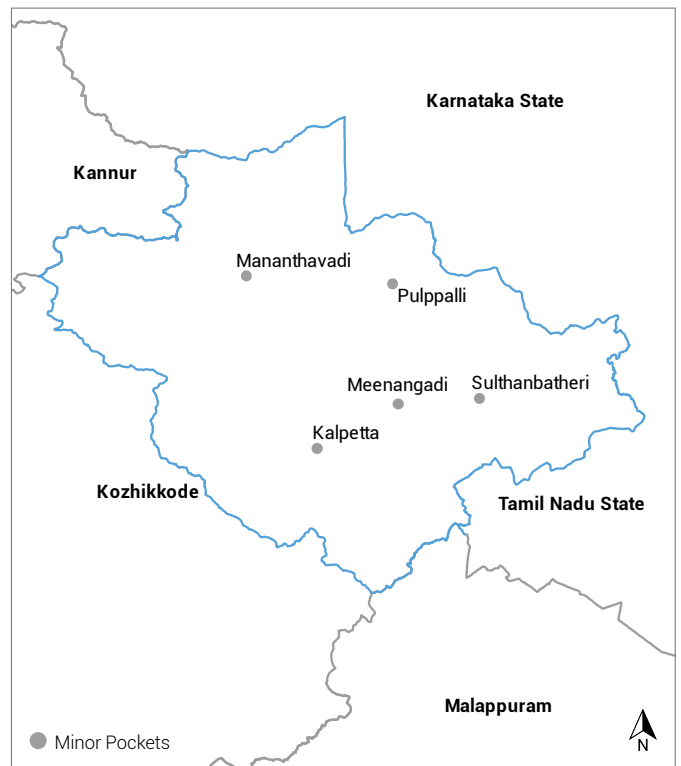
Nakas

Vijaya Talkies junction in Kalpetta, Sathramkunnu junction in Sulthanbatheri and the traffic circle close to Meenangadi police station are some of the major *nakas* in the district. There are *nakas* in Mananthavady and other smaller towns as well. Most workers at the *nakas* are from Karnataka. *Naka* workers are sourced generally to work in the farms.

Residential Pockets

Most of the construction workers stay on the work sites or in rented accommodations provided by contractors. There are also workers who make their own arrangements and stay in rented rooms. The plantation as well as factory workers stay within the work premises or nearby. A significant proportion of the *naka* labourers sleep on pavements. These workers who are from neighbouring districts in Karnataka go home during the weekends. Meenangadi, Emily Road in Kalpetta and Panamaram in Mananthavady are the major migrant pockets identified in the district.

Migrant Pockets in Wayanad District, 2016-17



Indicative map, not to scale



The plywood factories at Panamaram and Tharuvana areas in Mananthavady taluk depend on migrant labourers from West Bengal and Assam.



Savarnan P.S.

Majority of the plantation workers in Wayanad are from the neighbouring Chamarajanagar and Mysuru districts of Karnataka and Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu.

October 2017

Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development

CMID is an independent non-profit think tank devoted to migration and inclusive development, advocating for and promoting the social inclusion of migrants. CMID provides evidence informed solutions for mainstreaming inter-state migrant workers in India. This district brief was prepared based on a qualitative research undertaken by the authors across the 14 districts in Kerala during November 2016–May 2017. The study was funded by Thummarukudy Foundation. CMID also acknowledges the fellowship provided to the authors by Aajeevika Bureau during the period January to June 2017.



Centre for Migration and
Inclusive Development.

