

# Alappuzha

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Labour Migration to Kerala





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**C**onstruction, fishing, seafood, coir, agriculture, hospitality and brick kilns are the major economic sectors in Alappuzha district. Except coir and paddy cultivation, most of the other sectors in the district depend on migrant labour. Though there is sporadic involvement of migrant labour in paddy cultivation, their presence is limited compared to other sectors. Construction, seafood, hospitality and brick kiln have more migrant labourers than natives.

Migrants from Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Karnataka and Jharkhand are predominant in Alappuzha district. Brick kilns used to be a very common sight in and around Harippad, Mavelikkara, Budhanoor and Vallikunnam areas. But due to the ban on procuring clay, many of them have been closed down. Many have also been converted into units manufacturing paving blocks, sand (M sand) and cement bricks. All these units are completely dependent on migrant labourers.

These workers are primarily from West Bengal and Jharkhand. Nadia, Jalpaiguri and Murshidabad are the source districts in West Bengal. Men and women from almost all the districts of Assam are working in the seafood industry. Aroor, Kayamkulam, Azheekal, Alappuzha town, Muttom, Harippad, Chennithala, Mavelikkara and Budhanoor are the major migrant hot spots identified in the district.

## Construction

In Alappuzha also construction comes first in terms of the size of migrant labourers engaged. Major projects, mostly construction of flats and other independent residential properties, are in Alappuzha town. The construction sector engages migrants mainly from Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha. Major source districts are Nagaon and Dibrugarh in Assam and Malda, South 24 Parganas and Murshidabad in West Bengal. The construction of Alappuzha bypass is also progressing. Most of the workers in this project are from

Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. At the large scale constructions, migrants stay in accommodations provided by the construction companies or contractors. Mainly single men work in the construction sector in Alappuzha.

## Fishing

Marine fishing is a major economic activity in Alappuzha district and almost all the fish landing centres in the district have migrant workers. Most of the big boats which go out for fishing these days have a minimum of three migrants on it. Migrant fishers in Alappuzha are predominantly from Tamil Nadu, Assam, Odisha and West Bengal. Major source districts are Kanyakumari and Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu, Jajpur in Odisha, Baksa and Nagaon in Assam and South 24 Parganas in West Bengal. Migrants from Tamil Nadu and Odisha are traditional fishers. But there are many workers, especially from West Bengal and Assam who got engaged in marine fishing only after arriving in Kerala. There are also migrants working as helpers in ice plants in and around the fish landing centres. The marine fishing sector is dominated by single male migrants.

## Seafood

The fish processing units in the district are clustered in the Aroor-Eramalloor stretch with around 50 seafood processing and export units operating in the area. Though there are native workers, the sector depends on migrant labourers, both men and women. There are intermediaries in the recruitment of workers. A significant number of single migrant women and girls work in the seafood industry. Most of the migrants in the seafood industry in Alappuzha are from Assam, Karnataka, Odisha and Jharkhand. They stay in the hostels/dormitories provided by their employers. Workers from Lohit and Namsai districts in Arunachal Pradesh, Dhanbad district in Jharkhand

and Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Baksa, Tinsukia, Golaghat, Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Chirang, Lakhimpur, Barpeta, Nalbari, Dhemaji, Karbi Anglong and Udalguri districts in Assam are found working in the seafood industry. There are also workers from Rayagada, Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts of Odisha, and Kodagu, Uttara Kannada and Shivamogga districts of Karnataka.

### Hospitality

A famous tourist destination, Alappuzha has quite a lot of hotels and resorts. The hospitality sector engages migrant workers heavily. Like in other districts, the sector has mainly workers from northeastern states of India. Workers from Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir were found working in the sector. Nepalese men are also present. There are migrants working on the houseboats as well.

### Labour Nakas

Major *nakas* in Alappuzha district are located in Alappuzha town, Mavelikkara, Chengannur, Cherthala, Ambalappuzha, Choonad and Harippad. Bengali speaking people dominate these *nakas*. Almost all the *nakas* have the presence of Tamil migrants as well.

### Residential Pockets

In Alappuzha town, a lot of migrant workers live near the boat race starting point and finishing point areas. Aroor, Muthukulam, Budhanoor, Vallikunnam, Chennithala, Mavelikkara, Muttom, Chengannur, Azheekkal and Ambalappuzha are the major migrant residential pockets. Those workers who go out for fishing stay close to the harbour. A few of them stay on their boats as well.

Migrant Pockets in Alappuzha District, 2016-17



Indicative map, not to scale



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## 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.



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