

# God's Own Workforce

Unravelling Labour Migration to Kerala





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Benoy Peter and Vishnu Narendran



Centre for Migration and  
Inclusive Development.









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# Foreword



**Muralee Thummarukudy, Ph.D.**  
Chief, Disaster Risk Reduction  
and Operations  
U.N. Environment

Founder,  
Thummarukudy Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Thummarukudy'.

I left home in 1981 when I was only seventeen years old to get better education. In 1986, I left the state to pursue my dreams of higher education. In 1993, I left India in pursuit of better economic opportunities. So, for more than three decades now I have been a migrant, after having left home, my state and my country.

There are millions of people like me who are on the move. Some like me have been fortunate to choose when and where to go, and have had the freedom to return whenever we wish. However, many have moved away from their lands, often involuntarily, either because of some conflict or disaster that may have made it impossible for them to sustain their livelihood. However, all who have moved, either voluntarily or involuntarily, have done so with a similar kind of feeling and hope, the hope of a better life for themselves and their family, especially their children.

However, in the world out there, there is a lot of prejudice against migrants. When the economy is in good shape, migrants are often blamed for the increasing crimes and house rents, and when times are bad, they are accused of stealing local jobs. Yet economic theory and social assessment have consistently proved that migration is good for both the migrants as well as the host economies. At the top of the economic spectrum, they bring talent which is not locally available, and at the lower end, they take up jobs that nobody locally available wants. They not only contribute to the local economy but also send money back to where they have come from. Remittances from migrants account much more than external assistance in the case of most developing countries.

With a large number of Malayalies leaving all types of jobs in Kerala and moving abroad, an equal number of migrants from other states have come in to take up these jobs. In 2017, migrants are a ubiquitous sight in Kerala and they have come from everywhere - from nearby Tamil Nadu to places as far away as Manipur. This is something unique in the world, where a place is both the sender as well as the recipient of migrant labour for the same skill sets.

What bothers me as a Keralite as well as a migrant is that Kerala, which has built its entire economy and prosperity on an innovative model by sending its young men and women abroad, holds similar kind of prejudices against its migrants as in other parts of the world!

It is in this context that Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development was born, and I am delighted to have been able to play a part in its conception. The Thummarukudy Foundation is also happy to provide the organisation the support required to execute its mandate. This report will be instrumental in contributing to the increased understanding about the status of migration to Kerala and its many facets for both officials and the general public. I hope the authorities concerned take the recommendations seriously and implement them in a time-bound manner.

I hope the report also gets wide publicity in Kerala, India and abroad.

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# Preface



**Joseph Julian K.G.**  
Chairperson, CMID

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Julian', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Migration has been a significant catalyst of development in Kerala. Nearly three million non-resident Keralites contribute to the state's economy to the tune of more than one-third of the State Domestic Product. With the human development in the state substantially ahead of a majority of the Indian states, Kerala has witnessed advanced demographic transition and its repercussions. The shortage of native labour force to take up low-skilled low-valued jobs in the informal sector resulted in migrant workers from other states occupying an important and indispensable role in the economy of the state. A study commissioned by the Government of Kerala estimated that there were over 2.5 million inter-state migrant workers in the state in 2013.

Given the exceptionally high wage rates in the unorganised sector in Kerala compared to the rest of the Indian states, sustained availability of job opportunities in the informal sector and the relatively better treatment of migrant workers by the host community, Kerala has become one of the most sought after destinations in the country by poor internal migrants. And this trend is only likely to increase in the near future.

The Government of Kerala has taken cognisance of the inevitability of such migration. The State Planning Board constituting a working group exclusively on Labour Migration into Kerala, as part of the formulation of the 13th five-year plan, is a clear reflection of the commitment of the government to the issue as a responsible receiving state. In the absence of a national policy on internal migration, lessons from Kerala could be of immense value to several other states that would eventually follow the development trajectory of this southern state. Besides, Kerala has a strategic opportunity to disseminate its advanced social development into some of the least developed regions in India.

Kerala, with its unique and strategic position, both as place of origin and destination of migrants, has hence been carefully chosen as the location for the Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, which intends to evolve as a think tank on migration in South Asia. CMID is thankful to the Thummarukudy Foundation, India for the support it has extended to undertake this study to unravel the nuances of labour migration to Kerala. I congratulate the research team for coming up with such rich insights by visiting every nook and corner of the state. Perhaps it is for the first time in India that district migration profiles of a state receiving migrants have been prepared in such detail. It is hoped that the findings from this study will provide strategic insights to the stakeholders in formulating informed policy decisions, migrant-inclusive programmes and further in-depth research on the various facets of labour migration to Kerala.

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# Acknowledgements

With the donor priorities shifting northwards, NGOs in southern India are struggling to address the development challenges unique to the region. Internal migration, though a survival strategy for millions of rural poor in the country, is yet to get the attention it deserves in India. CMID deeply appreciates the concern of the Thummarukudy Foundation, India, towards migrant workers in Kerala and is grateful for the incubation support it has been providing us, which made this study possible.

Our sincere thanks to Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy, Chief, Disaster Risk Reduction and Operations, UN Environment and founder of the Thummarukudy Foundation, for his illuminating ideas and innovative strategies of leveraging information and resources for this study through Facebook. His fathomless support and constant inspiration have kept CMID on track and have helped in tiding over the crises faced by us as a budding NGO. Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy played a key role in setting up the CMID in 2016.

CMID is grateful to Aajeevika Bureau, Rajasthan, India for the fellowship provided to the authors during the period from January to June 2017 which also contributed to the successful completion of this research. We are privileged by the technical support, mentoring and constant inspiration being provided by Mr. Rajiv Khandelwal, Executive Director, Aajeevika Bureau and his team. We are grateful to Dr. Nivedita P. Haran, I.A.S (retired), Director, Centre for Innovations in Public Systems, Hyderabad and member of Board of Directors, CMID, for the constant inspiration and guidance.

We are also highly indebted to various officials from the Department of Labour and Skills, Industries and Commerce, Home Affairs, Health and Family Welfare and General Education, Government of Kerala for the cooperation extended during the fieldwork of the study. Mr. Vinod G., Assistant Registrar, Project Office (Cair), Kozhikode deserves special mention here for having connected the research team to officials and Key Informants in all the 14 districts in Kerala. We are grateful to all those who disseminated the information about the requirements of the study through Facebook, and those who provided valuable information on sectors that engage migrant workers. We also thank employers, contractors, migrant workers and other Key Informants who provided valuable inputs on labour migration to the research team.

We thank Mr. Subhash Velayudhan I.A.S., RDO, Tirur, Ms. Haseena K.S., Research Scholar, University of Kerala, Mr. Shahbad Perumal, Project Fellow, Mahatma Gandhi University, team Jeevika, Kozhikode, Mr. Vijayakumar Blathoor, Kannur and the staff of targeted intervention projects among migrant workers in select districts by Kerala State AIDS Control Society, for the support extended and the insights provided during the fieldwork. We are grateful to Mr. Savanan R.S., Ms. Neeraja C.J., Mr. Balakrishnan Koyyal, Mr. Arjun Pournamy, Mr. Ranjith M.R., Mr. Sunil Pankaj, Mr. Prasanth V.S., Mr. Rajesh Krishna, Mr. Anil Chandran, Mr. Leejan Mariadas and Mr. Anestes M.P. for contributing to the image repository of CMID for the publication. We acknowledge the support of Mr. Bijoy Jacob in design and art direction of the publication almost on a voluntary basis, and Pan Environ India for its contribution in the preparation of the thematic maps.

CMID owes a lot to Mr. Joseph Julian K.G., the Chairperson of CMID, Dr. Binod Kumar Singh, Senior Geographer, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Dr. Bidhubhushan Mahapatra, Project Director, HIV and AIDS Programme, Population Council, India and Dr. Ajith Kumar, Director, Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies, Kochi, India, for sparing time to review the data/draft report and providing valuable inputs. We also acknowledge the data support/special inputs by Prof. Irudaya Rajan as well as Prof. U.S. Mishra, Centre for Development Studies, India. We are indebted to Ms. Indu Varma, Dhaka, Bangladesh for the insights provided.

Special thanks are extended to Ms. Vidya S. Chandran, Government Higher Secondary School, Kadayiruppu, Kerala, who went through the initial drafts of the report and provided meticulous feedback. We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Mr. Varghese Koshy, former Assistant Editor, The Hindu, in editing the report. We highly appreciate the technical support and expert advice provided by Mr. Haridas Nareekal, CEO, Neospark, and Mr. Sunil Prabhakar, Consultant (Online), Mathrubhumi, on the design and publication.

Thanks to Mr. Bejoy Peter, AMVI, Mattancherry, Ernakulam, for the logistical support, and Ms. Shanthi Sasikumar for coordinating the back office. Sincere thanks to Adv. Anil Kumar K.N, Dr. K. Rajesh, Mr. Anoop Roy and Dr. Baishali Goswami, members of the CMID Board of Directors, for facilitating the fieldwork in Kerala, and Dr. Atanu Ghosh, for facilitating the fieldwork in Murshidabad. Finally, thanks to my colleague Mr. Vishnu Narendran for having done more than his share of field work to ease me out for other assignments. Once again thanking all those who contributed directly or indirectly to the study.

Sincerely



Benoy Peter, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, CMID

Perumbavoor  
October 27, 2017







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# Executive Summary

Migration plays a pivotal role in the economy of the southern Indian state of Kerala. The demographic advancement of Kerala's population has resulted in a situation wherein the state has a diaspora of the size of nearly three million while for the domestic requirements it depends on a migrant workforce of almost the same size. Workers from beyond south India take care of most of the low-skilled, low-valued jobs at present. While these migrants have become an inevitable part of the Kerala society, with their arrival, there have also emerged several challenges. Addressing these challenges calls evidence-informed policies, programmes and strategies. With the support of the Thummarukudy Foundation, India, CMID conducted a study to explore the dynamics of labour migration to Kerala.

A qualitative inquiry was undertaken during 2016-2017 to provide insights into the profile of migrant labourers in Kerala, the sectors in which they are employed and the spatial distribution of these workers within the state. Two researchers with advanced degree in migration studies, and who speak at least four Indian languages including Tamil, Hindi, Bengali and Malayalam, travelled over 11,500 kilometres across 14 districts during the period from November 2016 to May 2017, collecting data from nearly 900 Key Informants. The data on source districts elicited by the researchers were analysed to understand the migration patterns. As part of data triangulation, one of the researchers also visited Murshidabad district in West Bengal which is one of the major sources of migration to Kerala.

The study found migrants from 194 districts across 25 Indian states/Union Territories working in Kerala during 2016-2017. More than four-fifths of these districts belong to eight Indian states - Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam. The profile of migrant workers in Kerala varied from place to place, and also on the basis of the states of their origin as well as the sectors of their employment. People from Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and minority communities from far off regions appear to constitute a majority of the migrant workforce in Kerala. They included single women and girls, senior citizens and families.

Exceptionally high wage rates compared to the rest of India, sustained job opportunities, comparatively peaceful social environment, relatively less discriminatory treatment of workers, presence of significant others, direct trains from native states, the ease with which money can be transferred home and the penetration of mobile phones that shortened the distance from their homes were found to have influenced the migration to Kerala. The major source areas from where workers come to Kerala are also known for floods, cyclones, droughts as well as conflicts.

Construction, hospitality, plantation, iron and steel, wooden furniture, marine fishing, mining and quarrying, plywood, textile and apparel, seafood and footwear are the major economic sectors in Kerala that heavily engage migrant workers. Valappattanam in Kannur, Vellimadukunnu in Kozhikode, Kanjikode and Pattambi in Palakkad, Kandanthara, Adivadu, Vathuruthy and Ambalamugal in Ernakulam district, Aroor in Alappuzha, Paippad in Kottayam and Kazhakkootam in Thiruvananthapuram are the major areas of concentration of migrant workers.

Their jobs in Kerala called for arduous physical labour and put workers at elevated risk of exposure to accidents, injuries and even death. Depending on the temporary or permanent nature of their work, migrants were found living in pukka structures, makeshift facilities or even on pavements. Even in Kerala, akin to most of the major migrant destinations in the country, migrant workers experienced discrimination, harassment and exploitation. Although the Government of Kerala has taken proactive measures for the welfare of migrants, they are yet to be pragmatic enough and firmly rooted in grassroots realities to benefit these workers.

Kerala has emerged as one of the most promising destinations among the Indian states for migrant workers from many of the major states known for out-migration in the country. Given the demographic scenario of the native population, shortage of labour, current penetration of migrant workers in the state and the precarious state of human development in the source regions, this migration is only likely to increase.

Labour migration is more a requirement of the state than that of the migrant workers themselves, and it is fundamental to create awareness about this among the key stakeholders. For Kerala to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the state needs to usher in migrant inclusive development. The inclusion of migrant workers needs to be construed as a collective responsibility rather than that of the government alone. Migrant inclusive programmes and policies are important although targeted interventions are strategic in the initial phases.







# Labour Migration to Kerala

Migration has been a significant catalyst in Kerala state's economy. With a diminishing diaspora of the size of nearly three million in 2016, the state is increasingly dependent on migrant workers from the rest of India, the volume of which appears to be growing beyond three million. The state has evolved as one of the most prominent destinations for migrant labourers from other states in India.

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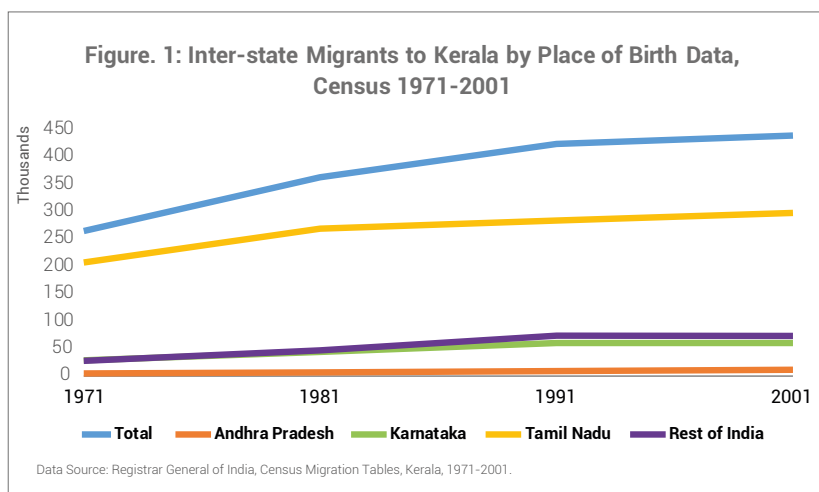


# Evolution

Since its formation in 1956, the state Kerala has been witnessing increasing in-migration, particularly from the neighbouring states. A majority of these migrant workers have come from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Almost half of the male migrants of various durations of residence and approximately ten per cent of the female migrants to Kerala during 1991-2001 came seeking employment.<sup>i</sup>

With two districts having already registered negative population growth during 2001-2011, Kerala is heading towards zero or negative population growth.<sup>ii</sup> The advanced demographic transition in the state had resulted in the emergence of nuclear families, which invested significantly on the education of their children. The universal enrolment and retention of children in schools irrespective of their gender resulted in the emergence of an educated youth population in Kerala and acute unemployment among them. This also resulted in a drastic shortage of native workforce in the unorganised sector, particularly to take up low-skilled jobs that required arduous physical labour.

Emigration from Kerala is also cited as one of the reasons for the transformation of the labour market.<sup>iii</sup> Kerala ranked first among the migrant receiving states in southern India in 2000, considering internal migration.<sup>iv</sup> This trajectory was obvious given the changes in the age structure of the native population.



## Migration from Neighbouring States

During the period from 1961 to 1991, workers from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka<sup>1</sup> complemented the native workers in filling up the requirement of the blue-collar labour force. There were specific sectors where migrant labourers were largely absorbed. The plantations, the brick kilns, and work requiring digging up earth predominantly depended on migrant labour. In those days when telephones were rare in the state, people who had applied for telephone connections could be seen anxiously waiting for *Annan*<sup>2</sup> to come and dig the underground telephone cable channels.

In Wayanad and Kasaragod districts, Kannadiga<sup>3</sup> workers catered to the labour requirement while in the rest of the districts, workers

from Tamil Nadu took care of such requirements. Tamil migrants played a key role in the construction sector in Kerala from the mid-1970s. The low or stagnant per capita availability of employment in both agricultural and industrial sectors in Tamil Nadu, coupled with the spurt of construction activity that arose due to the high inflow of remittances from Keralites working in the Middle East, had triggered such a migration.<sup>v</sup> The significant difference in wages and the sustained demand in the construction sector resulted in heavy migration from Tamil Nadu.

By 1990s Kochi, the construction hub and commercial capital of Kerala witnessed heavy migration of labourers from Tamil Nadu. Kadavanthra and Kaloork junctions in Kochi were some of the first few labour *nakas*<sup>4</sup> in Kerala.

1. Formerly princely states of Madras and Mysore

2. *Annan* means elder brother in Tamil. Male workers from Tamil Nadu are commonly addressed as *Annan* in Kerala.

3. Native of Karnataka state

4. Hindi word for junction. In many Indian towns, footloose labourers assemble in the morning seeking work. Those who require workers come to labour *nakas* and hire as many labourers they want.





Benoy Peter

A settlement of migrant workers from Tamil Nadu evolved at Vathuruthy in Kochi. In 2007, workers from 13 districts in Tamil Nadu, predominantly from Dindigul, Tiruchirappalli, Theni and Madurai were working in Kochi city.<sup>vi</sup> Three-fifths of the migrants in Thiruvananthapuram district in 2007 were from Tamil Nadu.<sup>vii</sup>

### Arrival of *Bhais*

Labour migration from beyond southern India started significantly with the arrival of migrants from Odisha to work in the timber industry in Ernakulam district. Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district and Kallayi in Kozhikode are the timber industry hubs in the state. During the early nineties when there was acute shortage of electricity, the bandsaw and ripsaw units in Perumbavoor could hardly provide two or three days of employment to the workers. Also, when timber trucks arrived late in the night, workers had to be present to unload it. Due to these reasons, native labourers were not much interested in the work. And the entrepreneurs did not prefer Tamilians who had learned to negotiate well. Besides, workers from Tamil Nadu kept going to their native places quite often, hampering the smooth functioning of these timber units. The sawmill owners hence mobilised cheap migrant labour from places to where they had been supplying their products.

Migrants from Odisha, who arrived first, lived on the mill premises and worked hard even at odd hours, and were content with whatever limited work was available and the free accommodation provided. *Bhais*<sup>5</sup>,

as they are popularly called, who received higher wages than what they could earn elsewhere, enjoyed the work and the peaceful life in Kerala. The timber entrepreneurs in Perumbavoor preferred migrants from eastern India over Tamilians because they came single, were less expensive, more subservient, hardworking and available, relatively, throughout the year.<sup>viii</sup>

### Migration from Eastern India

The emergence of Kanjikode in Palakkad during the nineties as a hub of iron and steel industry, led to the sourcing of workers from Bihar. The work required skill and constant exposure to intense heat. The Supreme Court of India banned forest-based plywood industries in Assam in 1996. This resulted in the collapse of this industry in Assam which had the monopoly in this sector in India, and the rise of Perumbavoor, which depended on rubber wood for plywood production, as a major hub of plywood production in the country.

With sawmills getting converted into veneer-and-plywood production units, migration from Odisha increased significantly. Also, there emerged a new stream of workers from Assam, particularly workers skilled in plywood production. Following their footsteps, unskilled workers from West Bengal arrived to work in the plywood industry.<sup>ix</sup>

Gradually, in addition to workers from Tamil Nadu, migrants from West Bengal, Odisha and several other states made a beeline to Ernakulam district, taking up any kind of unskilled work. While most of this labour migration was driven by the social network of

the workers, multinational companies too mobilised workers from Bihar and West Bengal using intermediaries, to work in their projects in Kerala.<sup>x</sup> The Government of Kerala also noted the increase in the number of workers from states such as West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.<sup>xi</sup> A study, covering four cities and six sectors of employment in Kerala, found that West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were the major source states of migrant workers in Kerala in 2012.<sup>xii</sup>

### Estimates of Migrant Workers

Robust estimates of migrant workers in Kerala are not available. A study commissioned by the Department of Labour and Skills, Government of Kerala, estimated that there were over 2.5 million inter-state migrant workers in the state in 2013.<sup>xiii</sup> The net annual addition per year according to this study conducted by the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, was 1,82,000 migrants. However, there are also experts who view that this estimate is on the higher side.

The study, based on long distance trains terminating in Kerala, does not cover migrants from the neighbouring states who use other modes of transport. Assuming that the estimation is rigorous and extrapolating it, taking into account the net annual addition, possible growth in migration rate, as well as accounting for the migration from the neighbouring states, Kerala is likely to have 3.5 to 4 million inter-state migrant workers in 2017.

5. The literal meaning of *Bhai* is brother, however, in Kerala, the word has now become a synonym for migrant worker from beyond south India.









## The Study

Through a qualitative inquiry undertaken during 2016-2017, the study attempts to gather insights into the profile of migrant labourers in Kerala, the sectors in which they are employed and the spatial distribution of these workers within the state so that informed decisions, in-depth studies and pragmatic interventions can be taken up.

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# Design

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Two researchers with advanced degree in migration studies, and who speak at least four Indian languages including Tamil, Hindi, Bengali and Malayalam travelled over 11,500 kilometres across 14 districts collecting data from nearly 900 Key Informants during the period from November 2016 to May 2017.

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While migrants have become an inevitable part of the Kerala society, several challenges have emerged with their arrival. Ensuring them decent working and living conditions as well as wages, access to quality health services, financial and legal inclusion, and education for their children are some of them. Though the Government of Kerala has initiated several ambitious steps to promote the welfare of the migrant workers, it is yet to succeed in making a significant impact.

## Mapping Labour Migration to Kerala

The absence of strategic information about the dynamics of migration has been a critical barrier in designing evidence-informed policies in this regard. If the policy makers, bilateral and multilateral organisations, the academia, the private sector and civil society organisations have a better understanding of the issues involved in the matter, that would help them to comprehensively address the challenges, thereby ensuring a migrant-inclusive development in Kerala.

Set up by a fraternity of international development experts, in 2016, CMID is a budding independent non-profit institution devoted to migration and inclusive development, advocating and promoting the social inclusion of migrants.

One of the key priorities of CMID during 2016-2017 has been catalysing the efforts to address the evidence gap on labour migration to Kerala. The purpose of this study is to provide the key stakeholders insights about

the profile of migrant labourers in Kerala, the major economic sectors in which they are employed and the spatial distributions within the state so that informed, in-depth studies and interventions can be carried out.

## Methodology

The study has relied mainly on qualitative inquiry, pursuing an exploratory research design. A free listing of the economic sectors in Kerala that have predominantly engaged migrant workers was undertaken in October 2016 through Facebook. Data on residential pockets of migrant workers were also elicited. This list was then sorted by district, and potential Key Informants were identified from those who responded. The study reached out to more Key Informants through snowballing.

Two researchers with advanced degree in migration studies, and who speak at least four Indian languages including Bengali, Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam travelled across all the 14 districts in Kerala and collected data through Key Informant Interviews and observation. One of the two researchers spent on an average two to three days in each district collecting data. One or two districts were covered in a single field trip in order to avoid burnout. In each district, they validated the list of sectors and residential pockets of migrant workers obtained through Facebook, by interviewing key officials from at least one among the Department of Industries, Labour, Health or the Police. This also helped in identifying other major sectors that heavily employed migrants, as well as the residential pockets of workers.





Once this information was saturated through triangulation, the researchers visited the locations and validated the data with migrant workers, their family members, employers, contractors, representatives of civil society organisations, researchers who work on migration and other Key Informants. To validate the presence of migrant families, the researchers also contacted officials from the Department of Education and visited schools in select areas. The researchers visited labour *nakas*, work places as well as residential pockets of migrant workers in the districts and interacted with them.

In order to understand the distribution of source areas, data about the native districts of migrant workers were also collected from workers, employers as well as from police stations at places where other sources of information were limited. The data on source districts thus obtained were analysed using cartographic techniques to understand the migration patterns. In order to validate the significant presence of migrants from Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and minority communities, the data on source districts obtained through field work were also compared with the Census 2011 data on religion.

During the visits, the researchers also validated the inputs gathered by CMID through field trips, desk research, and interaction with key stakeholders during the period from June 2016 to September 2016 in the thematic areas of access to healthcare, education, legal aid and financial products and services.

The two researchers travelled over 11,500 kilometres across 14 districts in Kerala, collecting data from nearly 900 Key Informants. In May 2017, one of the researchers visited Murshidabad district in West Bengal which is one among the major corridors of migration to Kerala identified by CMID. The data collection took place during the period from November 2016 to May 2017.

This research covers major economic sectors in Kerala that employ migrant labourers from outside the state. The study excludes migration to take up white-collar jobs in the state. It has also not covered migrant workers in the military and paramilitary forces; migration for business purposes has also not been included. The refugees from Sri Lanka, Tibet and Myanmar in Kerala have also been excluded. The study has not covered migrant women engaged as domestic workers due to access constraints. Those who were into begging and into sex work have also been excluded.

### Limitations

Each district, except Ernakulam, was covered in a limited span of two to three days. Hence, there is a likelihood of sectors and locations getting missed out. The data on native states and districts of migrant workers are based on what the migrants have voluntarily revealed, reported by the employers or from their identification documents issued by the government. Many workers may not be aware of the names of the new districts recently carved out and are likely to have reported the previous name of the district.

Demonetisation was carried out during the study period, stalling field work. Demonetisation also resulted in stagnation of several industries and return of a lot of migrant workers to their native places. This also has affected the quality of data as the workers who returned to native places might have a different profile than those who had stayed back. Due to the government restrictions on quarrying as well as on the operation of brick kilns, both these sectors were relatively stagnant during the data collection period. Hence, the findings from this study may not reflect the real picture of the engagement of migrant workers in these sectors.

The primary purpose of the study was not to explore the working and living conditions, networking of migrants and other thematic areas which have also been discussed in the report. The information provided in these areas is based on the insights validated during the field trips and should be treated only as preliminary insights. At several industrial units, the researchers could not meet the migrant workers or had to meet them in a controlled environment, limiting the quality of information collected.

The maps used in the report are indicative and not to the scale. The international boundary lines on the maps represent approximate border lines and are not certified. Maps have been used only for the purpose of graphical representation of data. The base maps were obtained from the Bhuvan portal of the Government of India.







## Key Findings







## Origin

Some of the longest migration corridors in India have evolved in the past two decades connecting Kerala with eastern and northeastern India. The study identified 12 new inter-district corridors, where the distance between source and destination district ranges from 2,300 to 3,700km. Tamil Nadu continues to be one of the major sources of footloose labour in Kerala.

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## Source Areas

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Migrants from 194 districts from across 25 Indian states/Union Territories were found working in Kerala during 2016-2017. More than four-fifths of these districts belong to eight Indian states. Nearly 60 per cent of the source districts belong to the east and northeast India.

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Migrants from 194 districts from across 25 Indian states/Union Territories were found working in Kerala during 2016-2017. More than four-fifths of these districts belonged to eight Indian states. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the south, Uttar Pradesh in the north, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and West Bengal in the east and Assam in the northeast India were the major states of origin of migrant workers. Nearly 60 per cent of the source districts belonged to the east and northeast India. Two-fifths of the total source districts belonged to the eastern Indian states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and West Bengal.

Workers from far off districts such as Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir

to Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh were also found. Migrants from Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim, Tripura and Assam worked in the textile and apparel sector. Boys from Nagaland were found working in the hospitality sector. Labourers from Rajasthan sold gadgets at busy traffic junctions in Kochi.

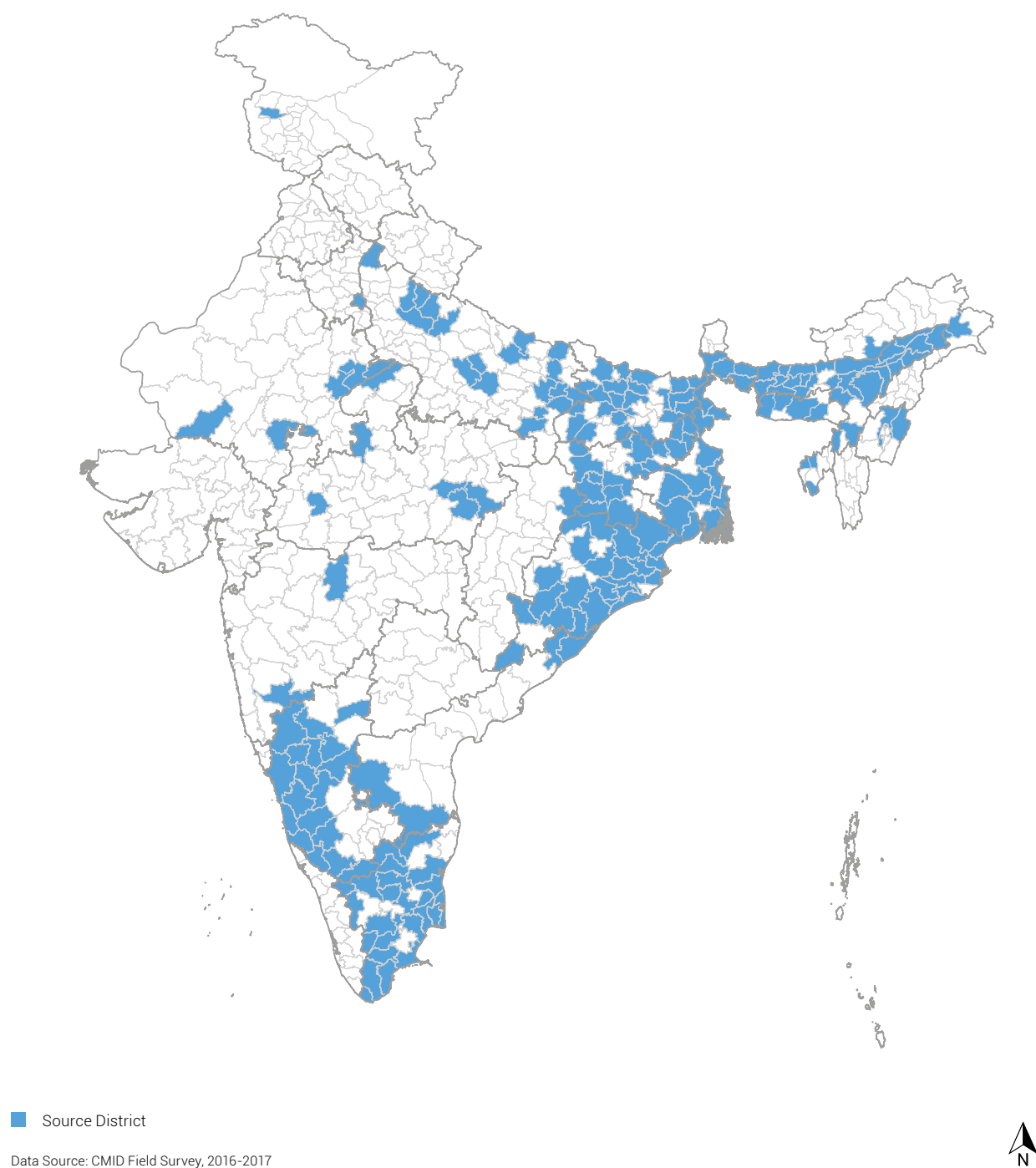
Men and boys from Delhi worked in the saloons. Men and women from Andhra Pradesh sought work from Kochi city labour *nakas*. Workers from Madhya Pradesh were found in the plantations. Women workers from Maharashtra were found in Kasaragod. There were also workers from Nepal and Bangladesh.



**Figure. 2: Labour Migration to Kerala: Source States, India, 2016-17**



**Figure. 3: Labour Migration to Kerala: Source Districts, India, 2016-17**





# Corridors

During the past two decades, some of the longest labour migration corridors in India have evolved, connecting Kerala with states in the north, east and northeast India. In addition to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have been supplying significant footloose labour in Kerala, Assam in the northeast, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar in the east, and Uttar Pradesh in the north have now emerged as major source states. People from Bangladesh, who report Assam or West Bengal as their native state, also work in large numbers across Kerala.

The study has identified 12 such new inter-district corridors, the longest among them being Dibrugarh-Kottayam. Workers from Dibrugarh in

Assam travel over 3,500 kilometres to work in Kottayam district, taking up jobs in the unorganized sector. Nagaon-Ernakulam is another corridor where workers, particularly Bengali Muslims,<sup>6</sup> come from Assam to work in the plywood industry in Perumbavoor. Workers from Nagaon and Murshidabad in West Bengal are available as footloose labour almost universally in Ernakulam district. A visit to Murshidabad revealed that from places such as Jalangi, Domkal and Islampur, significant number of young men come to work in Kerala.

Similarly, workers from Bardhaman district in West Bengal were available at every nook and corner of Kozhikode and Malappuram districts in Kerala. Kozhikode also shares corridors with

North 24 Parganas as well as South 24 Parganas.

Kollam district is connected with Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts in West Bengal in addition to Nagaon in Assam. Workers from Jalpaiguri are available all over Kottayam district.

Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh is another district which has evolved as a corridor in the furniture sector, connecting the district with Ernakulam. Traditional sources such as Kanyakumari and Ramanathapuram districts continue to supply migrant fishers who work at the fish landing centres all over Kerala. Migrant labourers from north Karnataka work in Wayanad and Kasaragod.

**Table.1: District-level migration corridors that evolved in the past two decades, 2016-17**

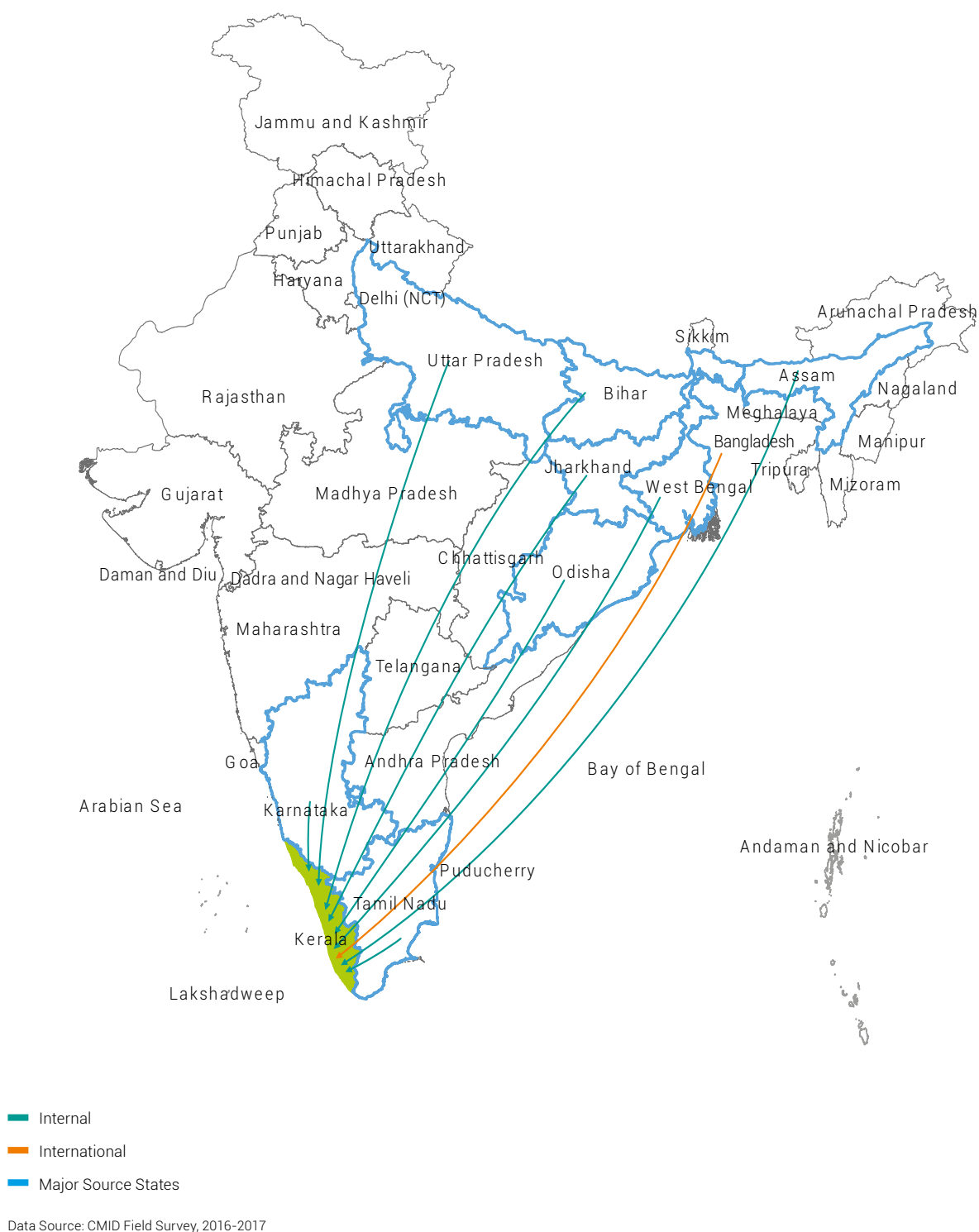
No	Destination	Source District	Source State	Distance <sup>7</sup> (km)
1	Kollam	Nagaon	Assam	3,500
2	Kollam	Cooch Behar	West Bengal	3,000
3	Kollam	Jalpaiguri	West Bengal	3,000
4	Kottayam	Jalpaiguri	West Bengal	2,900
5	Kottayam	Dibrugarh	Assam	3,700
6	Ernakulam	Nagaon	Assam	3,300
7	Ernakulam	Murshidabad	West Bengal	2,500
8	Ernakulam	Saharanpur	Uttar Pradesh	2,800
9	Malappuram	Bardhaman	West Bengal	2,300
10	Kozhikode	Bardhaman	West Bengal	2,300
11	Kozhikode	North 24 Parganas	West Bengal	2,300
12	Kozhikode	South 24 Parganas	West Bengal	2,300

Data Source: CMID Field Survey, 2016-2017

6. Muslims whose mother tongue is Bengali.

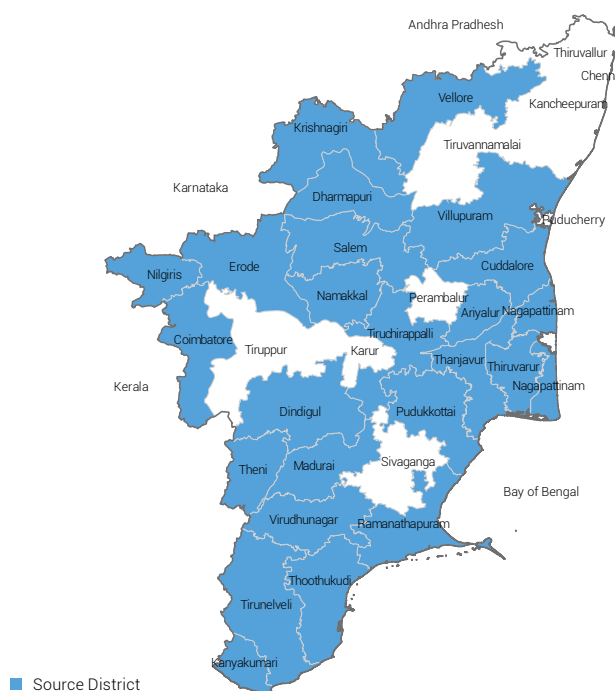
7. Approximate distance

**Figure. 4: Major Migration Streams to Kerala, 2016-17**





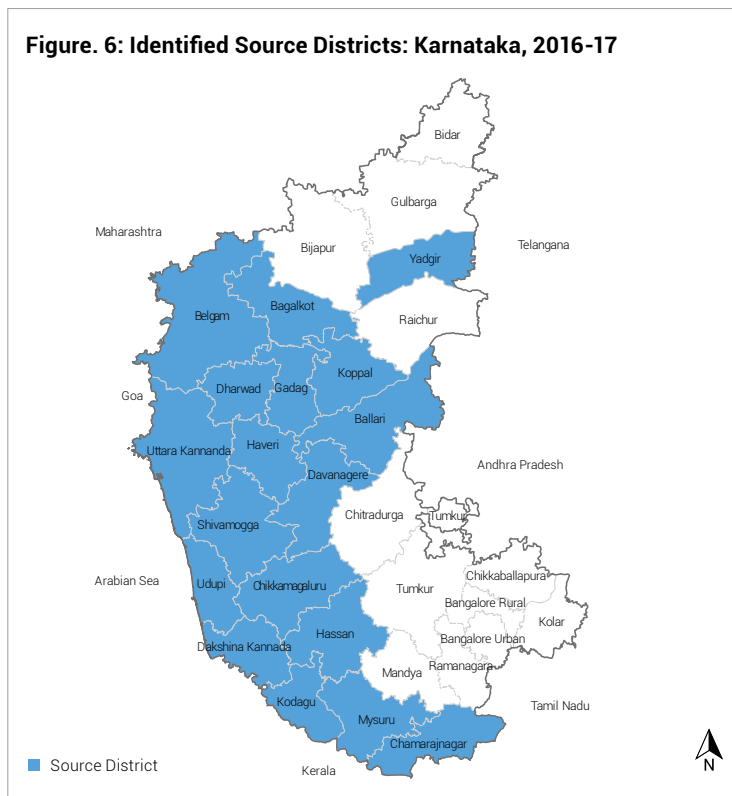
# Tamil Nadu



8. Workers from West Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh whose mother tongue is Bengali.

# Karnataka

**Figure. 6: Identified Source Districts: Karnataka, 2016-17**



Migrants from 17 districts in Karnataka worked in Kerala during 2016–2017. Migration from Karnataka to Kerala was mostly confined to the three districts of Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod which share borders with Karnataka. Social networks primarily facilitated the migration. Workers in Wayanad were predominantly from the neighbouring Chamarajanagar and Mysuru districts of Karnataka, while in Kasaragod a majority of the workers were from northern Karnataka districts such as Belagavi, Dharwad, Bagalkot, Haveri, Shivamogga, Davanagere, Ballari and Koppal. Migrants from the districts near Bangalore were not found.

A lot of workers from Karnataka came with their families that included small children. Kannadigas constituted

the majority of the footloose labour in Kasaragod and Wayanad. On the National Highway, from Manjeswar to Cherkkala, migrant workers from north Karnataka dominated the *nakas* in Kasaragod. Plantations in Wayanad and laterite mines in Kasaragod and Kannur engaged workers from Karnataka in significant numbers. Women from Karnataka also worked in the seafood sector in Alappuzha and in the apparel sector in Ernakulam district. Fishers from Udupi district worked on boats that operated from Azhikkal harbour in Kannur district. Inland fisher folk from Hunsuru in Mysuru district were found in Ernakulam district. Hosangadi and Cherkkala were the two major residential pockets of migrant workers from Karnataka.

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Kannadigas constituted the majority of the footloose labour in Kasaragod and Wayanad. Workers in Wayanad were predominantly from the neighbouring Chamarajanagar and Mysuru districts, while in Kasaragod a majority of the workers were from northern Karnataka.

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# State Profiles

## Odisha



**Figure. 7: Identified Source Districts: Odisha, 2016-17**



Odisha is the first state beyond south India from where workers came to Kerala in significant numbers. Migrants from 22 districts of Odisha- Western Odisha, Coastal Odisha, Southern Odisha and Northern Odisha, regions which have been identified as having distinct migration patterns, were found working in Kerala.<sup>9</sup>

A lot of workers from Odisha belonged to Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Gajapati, Rayagada, Kandhamal and Sundargarh, districts in Odisha with more than half of the population belonging to tribal communities. There were also Christian families among the Odiya workers. Some of them had moved out of Odisha during or after the Kandhamal riots in 2008. Kalahandi, Balangir, Rayagada, Ganjam,

Dhenkanal, Kendrapara, Bhadrak and Jajpur were some of the major source districts in Odisha.

Migrants from Odisha worked in the plywood, iron and steel, construction, mining and quarrying, apparel, seafood and fishing sectors. Except in the seafood, apparel and construction sectors, migration was driven by social networks. Traditional fishers from coastal Odisha worked on boats that operated from various harbours in Kerala. Some of the fishers said that due to restrictions imposed on fishing for conservation of Olive Ridley turtles, fishing on the Odisha coast had become unviable.

Kandhamal, Dhenkanal, Kendrapara and Kalahandi were the major source districts of workers in the plywood industry. Ganjam, Mayurbhanj and

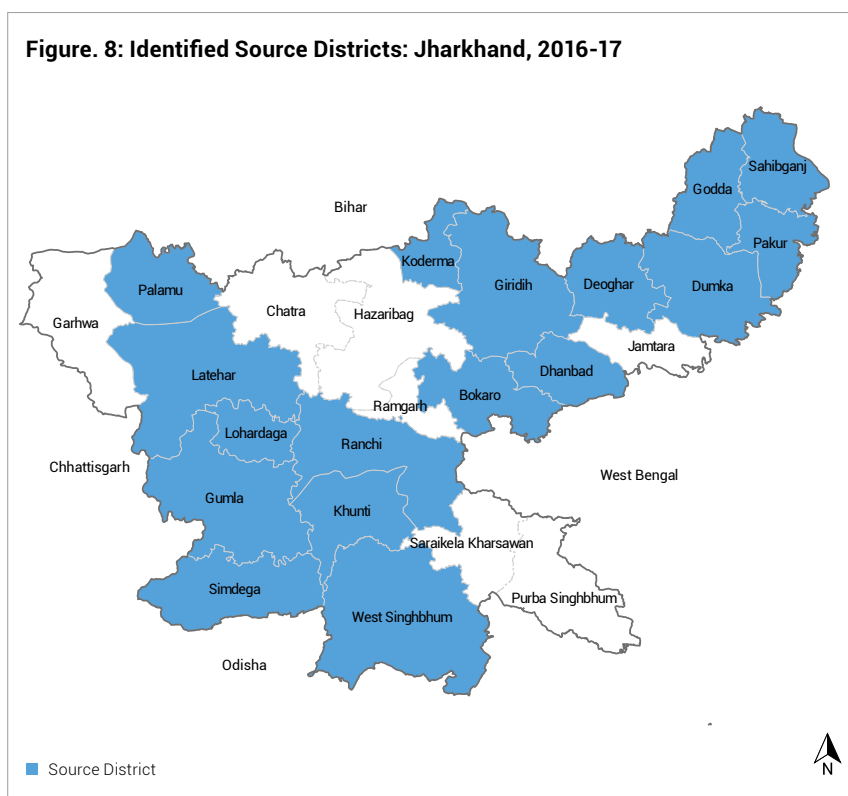
Kendujhar were some of the source districts of workers in the iron and steel industry in Palakkad which depends significantly on Odiya migrants.

Women and girls from Balangir, Malkangiri, Sundargarh, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Nabarangpur and Rayagada worked in the textile and apparel sector in Kerala. Odiya families were concentrated in and around Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district. An Odiya service is available on Sundays at a church in Perumbavoor, Ernakulam district. A nursery school for children of Odiya workers has been functioning on the premises of the Keenpuram industrial estate at South Vazhakkulam for several years now. A majority of the children were from Rayagada.

9. Classification by Centre for Migration and Labour Solutions; see Aajeevika Bureau. (2014). *Studies, Stories and a Canvas: Seasonal Labour Migration and Migrant Workers from Odisha*, Udaipur: Center for Migration and Labour Solutions.

# Jharkhand

**Figure. 8: Identified Source Districts: Jharkhand, 2016-17**



Workers from more than two-thirds of the districts in Jharkhand were engaged in various jobs in Kerala. Many of these districts such as Khunti, Gumla, Lohardaga, Simdega, Pakur, Dumka, Latehar and West Singhbhum are concentration areas of tribal populations. Families from Jharkhand worked in several plantations in Idukki and Thrissur districts. A lot of them belonged to the Oraon tribe. Migrant men from Jharkhand constituted a significant proportion of workers in the major construction sites including the expansion project of Kochi Refinery, Kochi Metro Rail, Kannur airport and Kasaragod Central University. The iron and steel sector also engaged workers from Jharkhand.

The textile and apparel industry engaged workers, mainly women and girls, from Jharkhand. Lohardaga,

Godda, Ranchi, Sahibganj, Gumla, Khunti, Simdega, Pakur and West Singhbhum were some of the source districts of women and girls from Jharkhand who worked in the textile and apparel industry. Workers from Dhanbad were found in the seafood industry, and labourers from Ranchi and Gumla worked in the brick kilns.

Migrants from Giridih, Palamu, Latehar and Deoghar were found in the construction sector. The iron and steel factories in Kanjikode in Palakkad and Edathala in Ernakulam had workers from Jharkhand. Migration from Jharkhand appears to be mostly organised labour mobilisation through a network of intermediaries. However, of late, network driven migration has become more prominent. The Dhanbad–Alappuzha Express is now one of the top ten most crowded trains in India according to a recent report.<sup>xiv</sup>

Migrants from more than two-thirds of the districts in Jharkhand worked in Kerala. Many of these districts have concentration of tribal populations. Tribal families from Jharkhand were found working in plantations in Kerala. A lot of them were of the Oraon tribe.

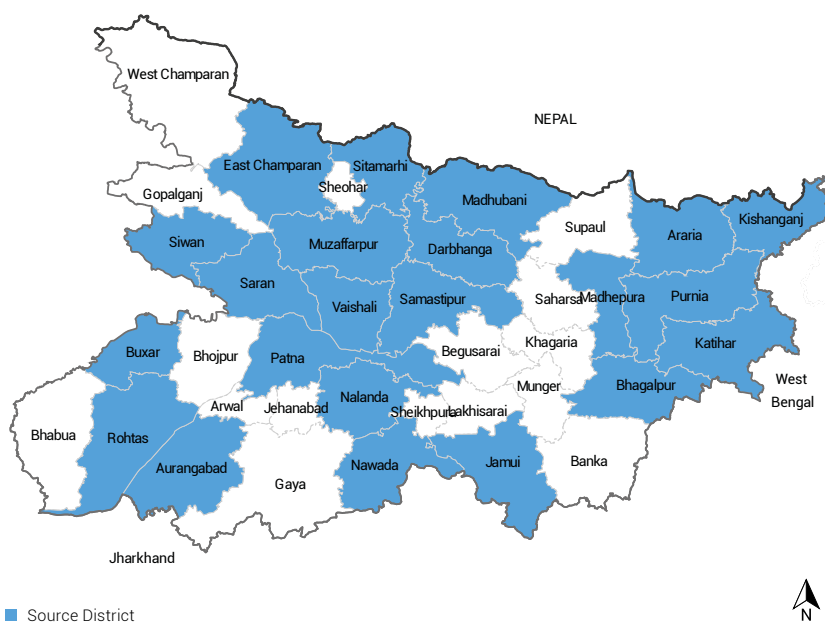


# State Profiles

## Bihar



**Figure. 9: Identified Source Districts: Bihar, 2016-17**



*“Kaun kam karega itna dhool aur dhoop mein? Bina Bihari India mein koi airport nahin banega!”*

“Who will work in such dust under the hot sun? No airport in India can be built without workers from Bihar!”

A worker from Bihar at the Kannur airport construction site.

Workers from a majority of the districts in Bihar were found in Kerala. Migration from Bihar is predominantly driven by social networks; however, there is also organised labour movement to the construction industry. Large scale construction in Kerala depended heavily on workers from Bihar. Major construction sites in almost all the districts had workers from Bihar. Workers from Bihar were also found at the *nakas* in Ernakulam district as well as at Kaltex junction in Kannur.

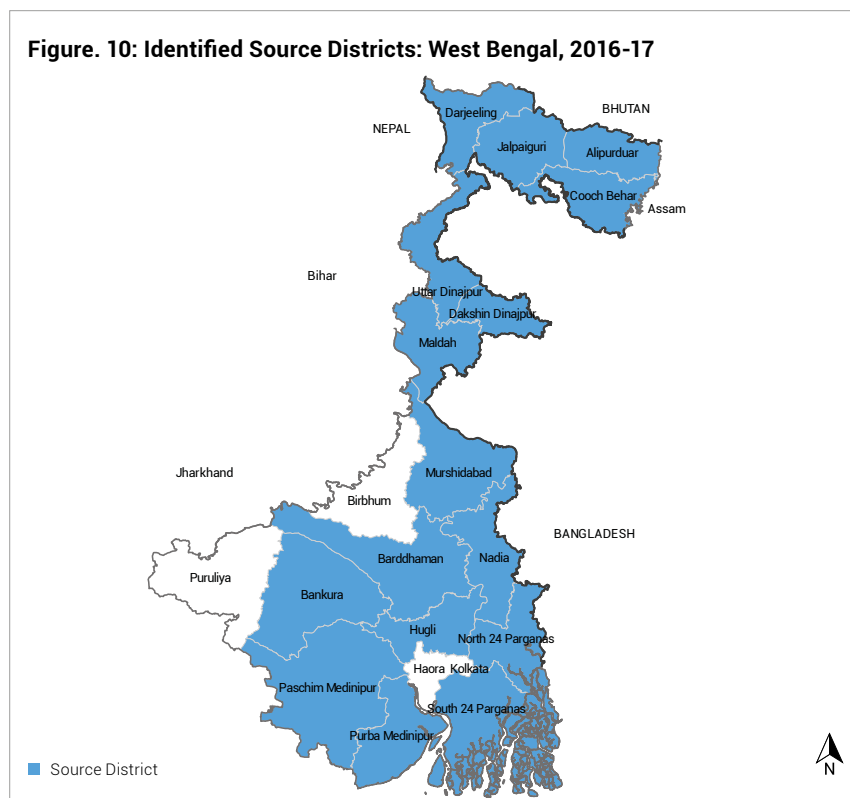
The footwear sector along the Nallalam-Ramanattukara stretch in Kozhikode engages workers primarily from Bihar. Purnia, Kishanganj, Madhepura, Champaran, Sitamarhi, Samastipur, Araria, Saran, Madhubani and Katihar were some of the districts in Bihar from where migrants arrived to work in the footwear industry.

Migrants from Bihar were employed significantly in the iron and steel sector at Kanjikode in Palakkad. Buxar, Nalanda, Vaishali and East Champaran were some of the source districts. The quarries in Pathanamthitta as well as private cashew factories in Kollam had workers from Bihar.

Brick kilns in Wayanad, Kollam and Alappuzha also had workers, including families, from Bihar. Plantations in Idukki too had families from Bihar. Binanipuram in Ernakulam district is a residential pocket of migrant workers from Bihar. Most of the workers with families worked in various factories in the industrial area. Families from Saran, Patna and Katihar districts in Bihar were found at Binanipuram. Pullad in Pathanamthitta district was found to be a residential pocket of single male migrants from Bihar who worked in the quarries.

## West Bengal

**Figure. 10: Identified Source Districts: West Bengal, 2016-17**



Workers from West Bengal constitute one of the largest proportions of the footloose labour in Kerala. They were available at the labour *nakas* in all the districts along with workers from Tamil Nadu. The minor construction sector had absorbed a lot of them. Workers from West Bengal were also available at the major construction sites operated by national or multi-national construction companies.

Migrants from all except Birbhum, Purulia and Howrah districts were found during the study. A large proportion of the migrants from West Bengal were Muslims. Large presence of Scheduled Caste people from West Bengal is also indicated, as South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Bardhaman, Nadia and Jalpaiguri, the five districts in India with the largest Scheduled Caste population are also

major source areas. Migration from West Bengal is mostly driven by social network. Murshidabad district is one of the major areas in West Bengal from where migrants had come to work in Ernakulam district.

The researcher who had visited Murshidabad as part of the study found that men and boys from most of the villages in Islampur, Domkal and Jalangi areas in Murshidabad district were working across several districts in Kerala. A mason who earned Rs 200 in Murshidabad got Rs 800 and above in Kerala. Bardhaman, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas were major source areas from where workers came to Kozhikode and Malappuram. Workers from Jalpaiguri were a major group in Kottayam district also.

The workers from West Bengal in the plywood industry in Perumbavoor mostly belonged to Murshidabad,

Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Nadia. Traditional Hindu fishers from South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal worked on boats that operated from the Kerala coast. Plantations in Palakkad district engaged families from West Bengal. Workers from Jalpaiguri district were engaged in the cane furniture industry. The hospitality industry engaged workers from Darjeeling district.

Adivadu, Kandanthara, Kalady, Angamaly and Karimugal in Ernakulam district, Paippad in Kottayam district, Pattambi in Thrissur and Vellimadukunnu in Kozhikode district were some of the major pockets of migrant workers from West Bengal. Families from West Bengal were clustered in various panchayats near Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district and Nelliampathy in Palakkad district.

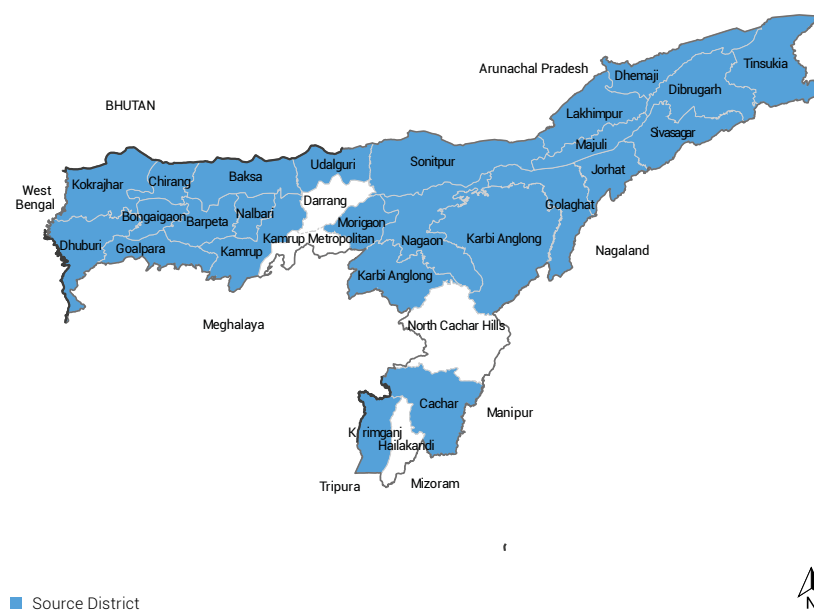


# State Profiles

## Assam



**Figure. 11: Identified Source Districts: Assam, 2016-17**



Migration from Assam to Kerala started in the late nineties as the plywood industry in Assam collapsed in 1996. While the first wave of migrants from Assam constituted predominantly Bengali Muslims with Nagaon as the focal point, the latest wave of migrants includes Hindu and Christian men and women from most of the districts. Migrants from Assam came to work in the plywood industry in Perumbavoor first. Now the plywood sector in Perumbavoor as well as Valapattanam in Kannur engages workers from Assam. Workers from 24 districts in Assam were found working in Kerala during 2016-2017.

Nagaon continues to be one of the major source districts of footloose labour from Assam in Ernakulam district. Kollam-Nagaon and Dibrugarh-Kottayam are the other two corridors. Currently workers from

most of the districts in Assam work in Kerala. A lot of them were from the tribal areas of Assam. The migration is mainly driven by social network. However in sectors such as textile and apparel and seafood, it is more organised. The textile and apparel sector engages significant number of migrants, particularly women and girls from Assam.

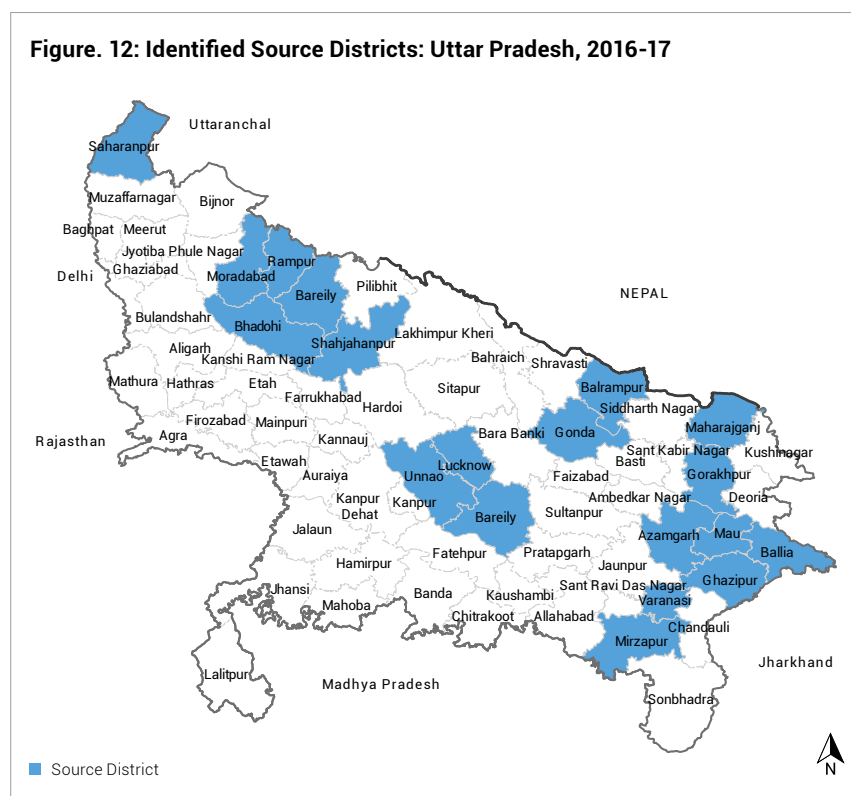
The seafood industry in Alappuzha district engages women and girls from Assam in large numbers. Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Baksa, Tinsukia, Golaghat, Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Chirang, Lakhimpur, Barpeta, Nalbari, Dhemaji, Karbi Anglong and Udalguri were some of the source districts. Unlike Bengali Muslims from Assam who are found in large numbers across several districts in Kerala, single Hindu and Christian men from Lower Assam were found to be the majority in the laterite mining sector.

A significant number of Hindu men from Assam were found engaged in dredging and sand mining operations at Azhikkal in Kannur. The men who worked in laterite stone mining areas in Indianoor in Malappuram district were mostly from Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar and Kamrup districts.

Men from Assam, who never had any previous experience in fishing, worked as deck hands on fishing boats that operated from several harbours. Several migrants from Assam were also engaged as labourers, loading and unloading ice and fish, at various fish landing centres. Men and women from Assam also worked in the hospitality sector across the state. Assamese families were also found working in the plantation sector in Idukki and Wayanad.

# Uttar Pradesh

**Figure. 12: Identified Source Districts: Uttar Pradesh, 2016-17**



Migration from Uttar Pradesh was mainly from the Rohilkhand and Purvanchal regions in addition to Saharanpur. Migrants from 18 districts in Uttar Pradesh had been found working in Kerala. Primarily it was single men from Uttar Pradesh who had migrated to Kerala seeking work. Except in the large scale construction sector, most of the migrants had come through their social network. Some of them had also brought their families.

Craftsmen from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, renowned for their wood carving skills, work in the furniture industry in Kerala. Artisans from Saharanpur, mostly Muslims, have been found in Kasaragod and Malappuram districts in addition to

Ernakulam. Workers from Saharanpur live with their families in and around Nellikuzhi near Kothamangalam in Ernakulam district. Muslims from the Rohilkhand region, primarily from Moradabad, worked at the fish landing centres across the districts. They were found working as labourers, loading and unloading fish and ice.

Workers from eastern Uttar Pradesh, historically known for male out-migration, were available in several sectors. Major construction companies engaged workers from Uttar Pradesh heavily in their projects in Kerala. Most of such sites in Kerala had the presence of workers from Uttar Pradesh. Workers from Unnao were found at the labour *naka* at Tanur in Malappuram.

The iron and steel sector in Kanjikode in Palakkad also employed workers from Uttar Pradesh. There were men even aged 60 years and above working in the factories at Kanjikode. A lot of the street *Pan Masala* vendors in Kerala were also from Uttar Pradesh. Nellikuzhi and Binanipuram in Ernakulam district and Kanjikode in Palakkad were the major residential pockets of workers from Uttar Pradesh who had come with families. Although a few in numbers, there were also migrants from Uttar Pradesh who had come as labourers and had graduated as entrepreneurs.



# Other Countries

## Bangladesh and Nepal



A significant number of undocumented migrants from Bangladesh also work in Kerala. These workers report Assam or West Bengal as their native states. Presence of men and women is documented in several districts. Trafficking of women from Bangladesh to Kerala was also documented by the police in Kozhikode and Palakkad districts. While several migrants from West Bengal in Ernakulam and Malappuram districts during the fieldwork mentioned about the strong presence of workers from Bangladesh, none of the Bangladeshi

workers revealed their identity to the researchers.

Although Bangladeshis and those from West Bengal speak Bengali, those from the Indian side could make out Bangladeshis from their different accent. Many workers without documents from Bagerhat, Narail, Khulna and Satkhira districts under Khulna division have been intercepted by the police in Kerala. Workers from Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions also cross the border to work in Kerala and other Indian destinations. Poverty is the basic reason for these cross-

border migrations. Trafficking of women has also been reported.

Key Informants from Murshidabad revealed that Bangladeshi workers who had relatives in India generally crossed the border and then moved to Kerala and other such destinations. These workers send remittances through informal arrangements. The money is first transferred from Kerala to West Bengal or to Assam through friends or relatives. Transfer is made through bank accounts or through *hawala*<sup>10</sup> agents who deliver the money to a specified person in West Bengal

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10. Informal system of money transfer



or Assam. From there, the money is again transferred through similar informal channels to their families in Bangladesh. Rupee and Taka are acceptable in the border towns of both the countries which makes money conversion and transfer easier.

Settlers from Bangladesh without documents, on the Indian side, particularly from Assam, move to Kerala as the chances of being intercepted as a foreigner are much lesser in Kerala compared to Assam. Several workers from Bangladesh who were intercepted without documents

have been repatriated. Presence of Bangladeshi natives in several prisons and a mental hospital was reported. Repatriation sometimes takes years as the process is complicated and time consuming. One of the major challenges before the Kerala police is ensuring the safe custody of the undocumented workers till repatriation once the court has ruled that they be repatriated.

Although in Kerala Nepali men (Gurkhas) had been employed mostly as security personnel, migrants from Nepal are now available across several

economic sectors in the state. Some of them even come here with families. The hospitality industry in Kerala engages men and women from Nepal. Women from Nepal work in malls as well as shops. Nepali men have also been found working in several industrial estates in the state. Migrants from Nepal reach Siliguri or Gorakhpur by road and then take a train to Kerala. Unlike Bangladeshi citizens, citizens of Nepal do not require visa if they enter India directly from Nepal.







## People

The profile of migrant workers in Kerala varied from place to place and also on the basis of the states of their origin as well as the sectors of employment. Workers from tribal, Scheduled Castes and minority communities from far off regions appear to constitute the majority of the migrant workforce in Kerala. This included single women and girls, senior citizens and families.

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# Overview

Men, women and families come to Kerala seeking work from the rest of south India. From beyond south, it is predominantly young single men from poverty-stricken rural agrarian families belonging to backward communities who make it to Kerala, depicting the very typical long distance internal migration scenario in India.

The study found that the profile of migrant workers in Kerala varied from place to place and also on the basis of the states of their origin as well as the sectors of employment.

## Migration from Southern India

From the neighbouring Tamil Nadu, it is mostly single men, single women, or husband and wife team who leave their children with relatives, who come to Kerala seeking work. Tamil workers constitute a major part of the *naka*-based footloose labour in Kerala. They were found mostly working in the minor construction sites, or fishing and agriculture sectors including plantations. There were even workers above 60 years old.

From Karnataka, it is mostly single men and families who were found coming to Kerala. Families often brought children also. Workers from Karnataka were mainly present in Wayanad and Kasaragod, and to a certain extent in Kannur too. The Kannadigas worked in construction, laterite mining, fishing and agriculture sectors, including plantations.

Men and women from Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh were part of the footloose labour in Kochi city. Except inland fisher folk from Mysuru in Ernakulam district where men, women and children were engaged in fishing, fishers from all other states were single men with age ranging from early adulthood to middle age.

## Migration from the Rest of India

The migrants from beyond south India were predominantly young single males from poverty-stricken rural agrarian families belonging to backward communities, depicting the very typical long distance internal migration scenario in India. Major constructions, industries and the fishing sector depended on the single male migrants from Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam.

The textile and apparel sector as well as the seafood industry predominantly engaged women from east and northeast Indian states. The plantation sector has witnessed long distance labour migration of families, particularly from the tribal and minority pockets of eastern, central and northeastern India. Migrant families from northern, eastern and northeastern states usually brought their children as well. Brick kilns had families from tribal backgrounds in addition to single men. Young single men and women from northeastern states and Nepal dominated the hospitality sector. Young men from Delhi, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh were also found working in several saloons.



# Women and Girls

## The Single Female Migrant

The study found that textile and apparel, seafood and hospitality sectors employed predominantly single women and girls. Most of these women belonged to eastern and northeastern Indian states. Odisha, Jharkhand, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya were some of the source states from where women and girls came to work in the textile and apparel sector. There were also women and girls from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal working in this sector.

Odiya women and girls from Balangir, Malkangiri, Sundargarh, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Nabarangpur and Rayagada were also found working in this sector. Lohardaga, Godda, Ranchi, Sahibganj, Gumla, Khunti, Simdega, Pakur and West Singhbhum were some of the source districts of women and girls from Jharkhand. Sivasagar, Karbi Anglong, Udalguri, Tinsukia, Karimganj, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Baksa, Barpeta, Golaghat and Kamrup were some of the districts from where workers from Assam had come.

The seafood industry in Neendakara as well as Sakthikulangara in Kollam district and Aroor in Alappuzha district engaged women and girls from Assam, Karnataka, Odisha and Jharkhand. Workers from Lohit and Namsai districts in Arunachal Pradesh, Dhanbad district in Jharkhand, Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Baksa, Tinsukia, Golaghat, Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Chirang, Lakhimpur, Barpeta, Nalbari, Dhemaji, Karbi Anglong and

Udalguri districts of Assam were found working in the seafood industry. It also employed women and girls from Rayagada, Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts of Odisha, and Kodagu, Uttara Kannada and Shivamogga districts of Karnataka. Presence of tribal women and girls is quite evident in this sector.

Women and girls, predominantly from northeastern India were employed in beauty parlours and saloons. Hotels, restaurants and resorts across districts also engaged women and girls from northeastern India and Nepal. Several hospitals also employed women from northeast India as attendants. There were also women from Darjeeling district in West Bengal in these sectors. Single women also worked in malls, textile shops as well as supermarkets. The industries which employed single women in large scale provided them hostel accommodation.

## Female Migrants with Families

The plantations in Idukki, Wayanad and Palakkad as well as the plywood industry in Ernakulam district engaged women and girls who migrated with families. Such families in the plantation sector were predominantly from the tribal areas of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Assam. There were also women and girls from West Bengal working in the plantations.

Plywood industry in Ernakulam district engaged women from Assam and West Bengal. Most of these women came with their families and their spouses also worked either in the plywood industry or in the construction

sector. Women and girls from Tamil Nadu worked in the construction sector as footloose labour. Most of them had come with their spouses. But there were also single women.

Majority of the women and girls engaged in the construction sector had come from Tamil Nadu. They also constituted the majority of the women among the *naka*-based labourers. In Kasaragod and Wayanad, migrant women from Karnataka also were available as footloose labour. Women workers from Buldhana district in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra were found working at the Sitangoli Road construction project in Kasaragod. Women from Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh sought work from the Kadavanthra labour *naka*.

Women with families lived in rented facilities they could afford. Vathuruthy, Binanipuram, Kandanthara, Nellikuzhi and Elamakkara in Ernakulam district, Kanjikode in Palakkad and Vagamon, Kattappana, Nedumkandam and Munnar in Idukki were some of the areas where migrant families were concentrated. Women were also found sleeping on the pavements at night in Kaloor in Ernakulam district. There were also migrant women who did not work. A lot of them were from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who had come accompanying their spouses who worked as labourers. Binanipuram in Ernakulam district is an area where there was a concentration of such women. Some of these women said they were interested in taking up self-employment that would let them work from home.





# Tribes

Eastern and northeastern Indian states that comprise more than half of the source districts identified by the study are home to a sizable proportion of the tribal population in India. Jharkhand and Odisha along with the northeastern Indian districts were the major source areas of migrant workers from tribal communities.

Marginalised among the marginalised, the tribes in India have been known for seasonal migration for survival. The study indicates a significant presence of tribal population among the migrant workers in Kerala. Although the study did not explore the presence of tribes at each place, an analysis of data on their districts of origin is presented here comparing with the data on the scheduled tribes from Census 2011. A few names of tribes that the researchers noted down during their visit have also been provided.

Among the 194 districts in India from where migrant workers have flocked to Kerala, 33 belong to top 100 districts in India with the largest number of Scheduled Tribe population as per the 2011 Census. And more than 50 per cent of the population in 21 of the 194 districts belonged to Scheduled Tribes; another 16 districts had tribal population ranging from 25 to 50 per cent. Eastern and northeastern Indian states that comprise more than half of the source districts are home to a sizable proportion of the tribal population in India. Jharkhand and Odisha along with the northeastern Indian districts were the major source areas of tribal population among the migrant workers in Kerala.

Single men from tribal communities in Jharkhand were found working on the major construction sites in Kerala. A lot of them were from the Oraon tribe. Santals from Jharkhand were found on the Kandappanchal hydro-electric power project site at Anakkampoyil in Kozhikode district. Lambadis from Anantapur sought work from labour *nakas* in Kochi city. They were found on the peripheries of the *nakas* at Kadavanthra, Thevara and Kaloor, revealing the dynamics of the *nakas* which are akin to the settlement patterns in villages where minorities/backward communities occupied the peripheries.

Konyak men from Nagaland were found working in the hospitality sector. Rabhas, Boros and Barmans from Assam were found working in the laterite mining sector in Kannur and Malappuram districts. Members of the Bhil tribe from Rajasthan also worked in Kerala.

Long distance migration of men from tribal communities is not something new to India. The study has revealed that tribal families had travelled 2,000 to 3,000 kilometres to work in Kerala. Plantations in Idukki, Thrissur and Palakkad have absorbed families from various districts of Jharkhand and Assam. Families from Dindori and Mandla districts in Madhya Pradesh were also found working in the plantations in Palakkad and Idukki.





**Table.2: Source districts of labour migrants in Kerala during 2016-17 with more than 50 per cent of the population belonging to Scheduled Tribes (ST) as per Census 2011, by proportion of ST population in the district.**

No	District	State	Proportion of ST
1	West Khasi Hills	Meghalaya	98.2
2	East Garo Hills	Meghalaya	96.0
3	Ukhrul	Manipur	94.4
4	Senapati	Assam	79.8
5	Khunti	Jharkhand	73.3
6	Simdega	Jharkhand	70.8
7	Gumla	Jharkhand	68.9
8	West Singhbhum	Jharkhand	67.3
9	Papum Pare	Tripura	66.4
10	Dindori	Madhya Pradesh	64.7
11	Jashpur	Chhattisgarh	62.3
12	Mayurbhanj	Odisha	58.7
13	Mandla	Madhya Pradesh	57.9
14	Malkangiri	Odisha	57.8
15	Lohardaga	Jharkhand	56.9
16	Karbi Anglong	Assam	56.3
17	Rayagada	Odisha	56.0
18	Nabarangapur	Odisha	55.8
19	Gajapati	Odisha	54.3
20	Kandhamal	Odisha	53.6
21	Sundargarh	Odisha	50.7

Data Source: CMID Field Survey, 2016-2017, Proportion of ST: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013

Of the 194 districts in India from where migrant workers have come to Kerala, 33 are among the top 100 districts in India with the largest number of Scheduled Tribe population. In 21 of the 194 districts, the proportion of Scheduled Tribes ranged from 98 per cent to 50 per cent.

# Scheduled Castes

Of the top five districts in India with the largest Scheduled Castes population, four have evolved as district-level corridors of labour migration to Kerala. One in every three of the top 100 districts with the largest Scheduled Castes population in India figured among the 194 districts identified in Kerala by the study.

Of the top five districts in India with the largest Scheduled Castes population according to Census 2011, four have evolved as district-level corridors of labour migration to Kerala. South 24 Parganas with the largest Scheduled Castes population in India and North 24 Parganas which ranks second, supply a sizable proportion of the migrant labour in Kozhikode district. Bardhaman which ranks third, shares a corridor with Malappuram and Kozhikode districts. A corridor has also evolved between Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, which ranks fifth among

the top five districts with the largest SC population, and Kottayam and Kollam districts. One in every three of the top 100 districts with the largest Scheduled Castes population in India figured among the 194 districts from where migrants were identified in Kerala by the study. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Tamil Nadu, which top among the states with the largest SC population in India, are the major sources of migrant labour to Kerala. The eight Indian states which supply majority of the migrant workers to Kerala are home to 58 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population in India.

**Table 3: Source districts of labour migrants to Kerala - 2016-17 among the top 10 districts in India with the largest Scheduled Caste Population, 2011, by significance of migration to Kerala.**

Rank	District	State	Significance
1	South Twenty Four Parganas	West Bengal	Corridor
2	North Twenty Four Parganas	West Bengal	Corridor
3	Bardhaman	West Bengal	Corridor
4	Nadia	West Bengal	Source District
5	Jalpaiguri	West Bengal	Corridor
7	Cooch Behar	West Bengal	Source District
8	Hooghly	West Bengal	Source District
10	Allahabad	Uttar Pradesh	Source District

Data Source: CMID Field Survey, 2016-2017, SC Population Data: Registrar General of India, Census 2011

# Minorities

Among the minority communities, Muslims and Christians were found working in Kerala although the number of Christians may not be comparable to that of the Muslims who constitute a large proportion of the migrant workers in Kerala. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Assam, four of the five states with the largest Muslim population in India, are also some of the major source states that address the shortage of labour in Kerala.

Muslims from western and eastern Uttar Pradesh work in Kerala. Artisans from Saharanpur who worked in the furniture sector were mostly Muslims. Muslim men, mainly from Moradabad, were found working at the fish landing centres along the Kerala coast.

Bengali speaking Muslims, who report Assam and West Bengal as their native states, comprise a significant proportion of the footloose labour in Kerala. Workers from Murshidabad, North and South 24 Parganas, Bardhaman, Jalpaiguri, Nadia and most of the other districts of West Bengal are available across the districts in Kerala. Seven of the nine districts in Assam, where Muslims comprise more

than 50 per cent population according to Census 2011, are important sources of migrant workers in Kerala. Corridors have evolved between Nagaon district that has the largest concentration of Muslims in Assam and the districts of Ernakulam and Kollam in Kerala. The Muslim migrants from Bihar were mainly from the Seemanchal region. A lot of them worked in the footwear industry in Kozhikode.

The Christians found in Kerala were mainly from Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Jharkhand and the northeastern Indian states such as Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram. The fishers from Tamil Nadu who operated from the Kerala coast were mostly Christians. There were workers from Jharkhand and Odisha who were Christians. Hindi service for Christian workers from Jharkhand was available on Sundays at a church in Anakkampoyil during December 2016. An Odiya service is available at a church in Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district. Many workers from Assam in the laterite mining sector in Kannur also reported Christianity as their religion.

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Bengali speaking Muslims constitute a significant proportion of the footloose labour in Kerala. The Christian migrants found in Kerala were mainly from Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Jharkhand and the northeastern Indian states. An Odiya service is available at a church in Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district.

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## Determinants

Kerala offers the best wage rates in the country in the unorganised sector. Sustained job opportunities, comparatively peaceful social environment, relatively less discriminatory treatment of workers, presence of significant others, direct trains from native states, the ease with which the money they earn can be transferred home and the penetration of mobile phones cutting short the distance from homes influenced the migration to Kerala.

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# Push Factors

The major source areas from where workers come to Kerala are also known for floods, cyclones, drought as well as conflicts. Low wages, limited and irregular employment opportunities, family debts, failed crops and lack of rains have been some of the major reasons that have pushed people to travel down south.

Migration has been a livelihood strategy for millions of rural poor in India for decades. Low wages, limited and irregular employment opportunities, failed crops, family debts and drought have been some of the major reasons that have pushed many people to leave their homes in search of jobs in Kerala too. Footloose labourers from Tamil Nadu have been lamenting about the lack of rains in their native place due to which agriculture is in a crisis. Workers from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh and those from northern Karnataka were severely hit by drought.

The major source areas from where workers come to Kerala are known for floods, cyclones as well as drought. In addition to these typical reasons, several workers from the eastern and northeastern states of India have cited political instability, caste oppressions and communal violence in their native places as reasons for migration. The distribution of the source districts, particularly the eastern and northeastern Indian states is fairly in sync with the map of conflicts in India.<sup>xv</sup> Forced recruitment by insurgent groups and the atrocities committed by them have also been cited as reasons for people moving out of these areas. Young men from Assam overtly mentioned about this. Some migrants from Odisha who were Christian, reported that they had fled their home state mainly because of the communal violence that had erupted in 2008.

Loss of livelihood opportunities due to the establishment of Marine Protected Areas and National Parks for the conservation of nature and wildlife, as well as the encroachment

of land and properties by the mining lobbies were also stated as reasons for migration by few of the workers from Odisha and Jharkhand.

The nesting of Olive Ridley turtles along the Odisha coast and related conservation measures have forced the fisher folk from Odisha to migrate to Kerala and other states, as revealed by Odiya fishers at the Azhikkal harbour in Kannur. Workers from Jharkhand and Odisha, including those from the tribal communities, had spoken about the challenges they faced at their native places due to illegal mining and allied activities. Fishers from Kakdwip in Sundarbans revealed that beyond the better wages being offered in Kerala, exploitation by the boat owners in their native place was also a reason why they had moved out. Fishers from Kanyakumari cited the unavailability of sufficient fish landing centres and supporting facilities in their native place as the reason for operating from Kerala.

The collapse of the plywood industry and the resulting unemployment were the initial reasons that triggered migration from Assam to Kerala. Young men from tribal communities who worked in the laterite mining sector in Malappuram had cited political tensions in Assam as one of the reasons for migrating. According to them, they did not have the freedom to move around in their native place, particularly late in the evening, the way they could in Kerala. The enforcement of Foreigners Act by the current government in Assam has accentuated the movement of undocumented migrants from Bangladesh in Assam to Kerala.





# Pull Factors

Kerala offers the best wage rates in the country in the unorganised sector- almost double the national average in many categories.<sup>xvi</sup> In the absence of the availability of native labour due to the demographic advancement and the resultant changes in the age structure of the population, the state is almost completely dependent on migrant labour. The high wage rates and the sustainable job opportunities have made Kerala one of the most sought after destinations in the country. Political stability, the comparatively peaceful social environment, and the relatively less discriminatory treatment meted out to migrants compared to many other potential destinations, also serve as additional pull factors.

Artisans from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh working in the furniture sector cited the conflict-free environment in Kerala as an additional attraction for them. Many workers from Bihar also felt that Kerala was a peaceful place to live in. The Muslim and Christian migrants feel quite comfortable in the state compared to other parts of India which is a significant reason for Kerala being chosen as their work destination. Hindi and Odiya services are offered for the Christian migrants in select areas in Kerala, and Muslim labourers tend to live in areas with significant presence of native Muslim community.

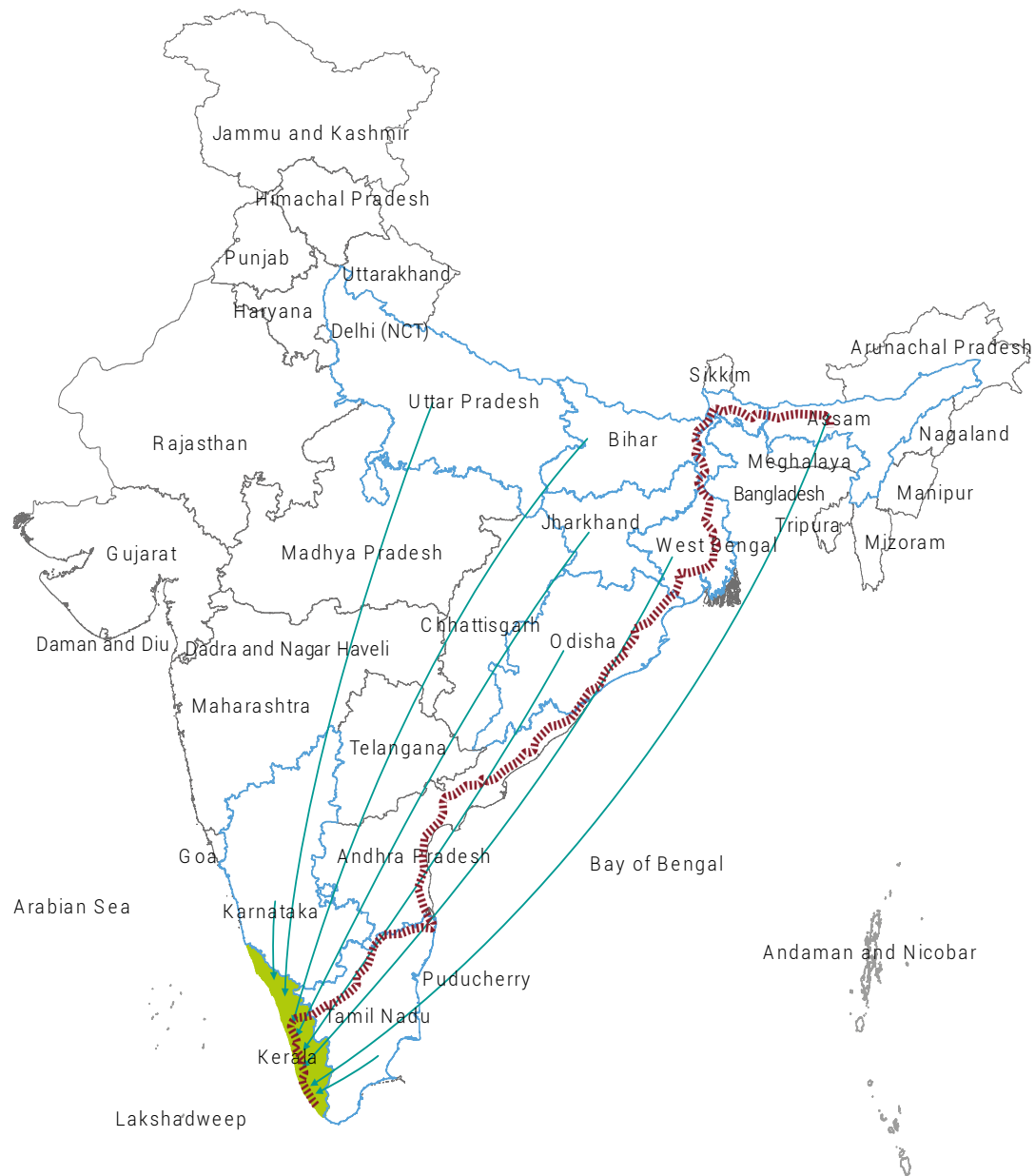
The strong social networks of the migrants who already work in Kerala with potential migrants too play an important factor in workers choosing Kerala as their destination from among several options. Better travel and communication facilities have also helped such long distance movement of workers. Direct trains without transit points beyond home states have made travel hassle free. The Guwahati-Thiruvananthapuram Express which originates in Assam, passes through Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Tamil Nadu, the states that supply most of the migrant labour to Kerala. The ease with which the money they earn can be transferred to their homes through formal and informal mechanisms and the penetration of mobile phones have also cut short the distance from their homes.

Some of the migrants who have come to Kerala with their families cited the availability of better educational and health facilities in Kerala as an additional impetus for sticking on here. There were also entrepreneurs from among the migrants in Kerala who have taken advantage of the presence of a significant number of migrants from their native place by establishing businesses such as *beedi* and *pan* sales in Kerala.

A lot of workers have also come to Kerala because they had been recruited by agents to work here, or because the company employing them had a project in Kerala. This is especially true of the workers in the large scale construction sites. Workers from several plantations were sourced from eastern India through agents. Some industries in Kerala also recruit workers from the source areas. Organisations including Christian missions which have outreach programmes in eastern and northeastern states bring young men and women from those locations to work in their hospitals and other facilities in Kerala.

In the hospitality sector, institutions from the northeast send students as trainees to various hotels and resorts in Kerala. A lot of such trainees are later absorbed by the industry. Thus a large number of migrants from the northeastern Indian states work in the hospitality sector. Through them many more also arrive to work in Kerala. The textile and apparel industry receives workers from eastern and northeastern Indian states through an initiative of National Skill Development Corporation.

**Figure. 13: Guwahati-Thiruvanthapuram Railway Route**



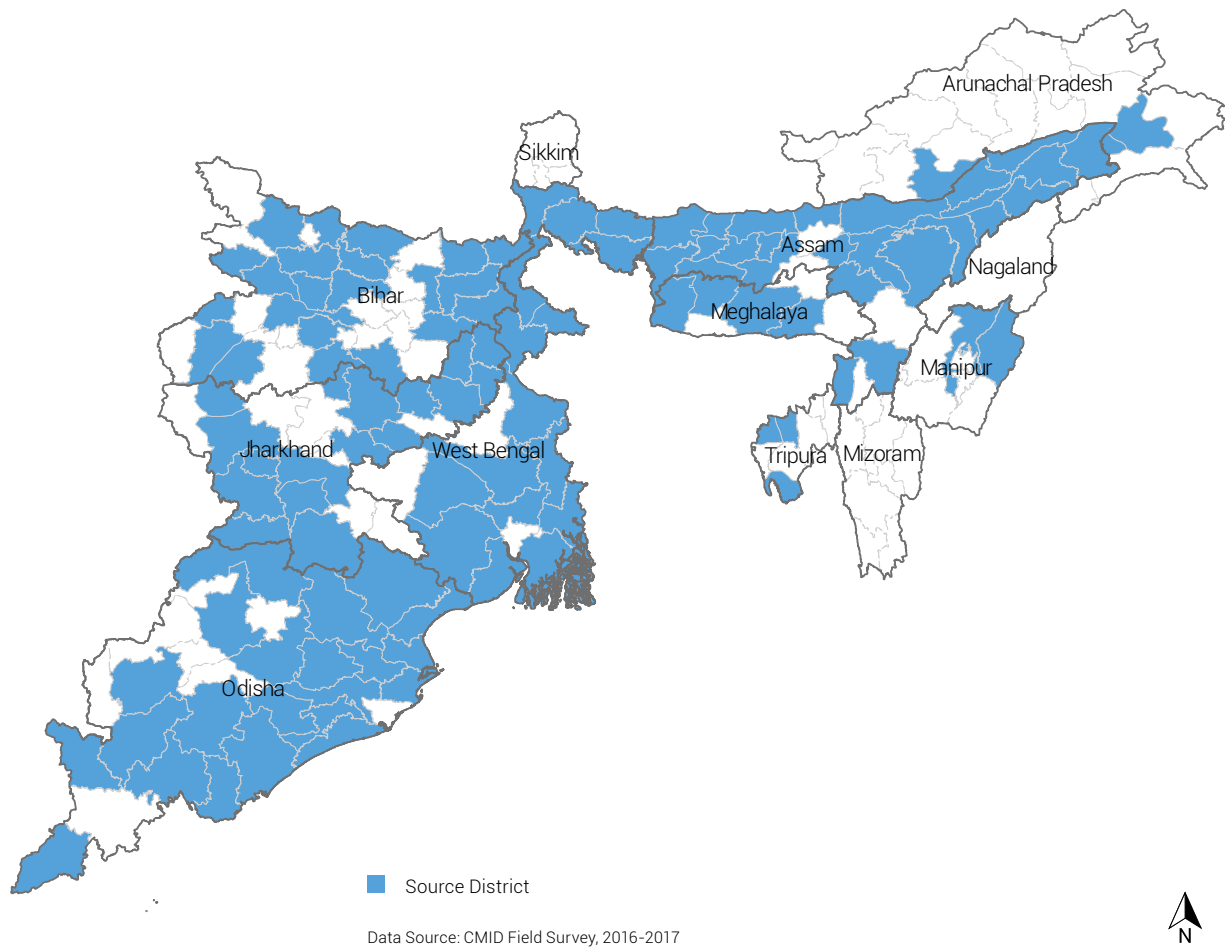
----- Railway Route  
 — Major Source States

Data Source: CMID Field Survey, 2016-2017,  
 Rail Route: Adapted from Indian Railway Map





**Figure. 14: Labour Migration to Kerala: Source Districts: East and Northeast India, 2016-17**



The rail route from Guwahati to Thiruvananthapuram originates in Assam and passes through West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha, majority of the lead source states, facilitating migrants' hassle free travel without transit points beyond their native states. Trains on this route are convenient for workers from Bangladesh and Nepal also.







## Work and Life

Most economic sectors in Kerala depend on migrant labour. These jobs call for arduous physical labour and put workers at elevated risk of exposure to accidents, injuries and even death. Depending on the temporary or permanent nature of their work, migrants were found living in pukka structures, makeshift facilities or on pavements.

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# Work Setting

Except a few traditional sectors such as coir, handloom and *beedi*, most economic sectors in Kerala depend on migrant labour. While most of the jobs involved belong to the unskilled or semi-skilled categories, migrant workers have also taken up vocations that demand high level of skills. Informalisation of employment has resulted in even public sector undertakings in Kerala employing migrant labourers through contractors.

The construction sector absorbs the largest proportion of the migrant workers. Marine fishing, plywood, mining and quarrying, plantation, iron and steel, textile and apparel, furniture, seafood, hospitality, footwear, gold jewellery making and processing of rice, cashew and several other food products are some of the major economic sectors that survive on migrant labour. Most of the industrial parks in Kerala also depend to a great extent on workers from other states.

The typology of workers and a brief description of the major economic sectors are given in the subsequent sections.

## Typology

The study found four broad employment arrangements for migrant labour in Kerala. While these four categories are not mutually exclusive, they explain the labour dynamics which are distinct. The footloose labourers, not attached to any particular employer, constitute a large proportion of the workers. These workers are free to choose their vocation, the location of employment, and have a reasonable negotiation power over their wages.

## Typology of Labour

### Footloose Labour

Not attached to any employer

### Informal Employee

Employed, but not on rolls, can change employer

### Formal Employee

Employed with social security benefits, can change employer

### Confined Labour

Confined to an employer, unable to change employer easily

The footloose labour constitutes most of the *naka*-based labour in Kerala. Most of them arrive in Kerala through their social network. Though these workers get the highest of the wages for an eight-hour job in Kerala, their chances of getting work every day are highly unpredictable. The daily wages of men for any unskilled job range from Rs 400 to Rs 700. They stay at rented premises they can afford, and a minority among them live on pavements.

The informal employees, the most common category of workers employed in the industrial sectors in Kerala, are either attached to an

enterprise or a contractor, but without any formal agreement. These workers will not be on the official rolls of the company and do not enjoy most of the social security benefits. Their wages are generally lower than the footloose labourers, but they have steady employment. They work for ten to twelve hours a day and many times on shifts.

In the case of large scale employment, free accommodation is generally provided by the employer. Workers are usually deployed through a contractor to whom the manufacturer usually assigns the deliverables. Most of the time, the contractor himself/herself is a migrant and payments are usually made on piece rate or flat rate. Informal employees perhaps constitute the majority of the migrant labour in Kerala.

A minority among the migrant labourers is also engaged as formal employees who enjoy all the social security benefits at par with the native labourers. A lot of industries have a handful of such employees who have been working there for years, while the rest are employed informally, directly or through a contractor. Workers are also appointed as trainees for long periods on minimal wages without benefits.

Confined labour is attached to some particular employer/contractor almost exclusively. These workers get the lowest wages in Kerala among the four categories of employment arrangements. While most of the informal employees are recruited at the destination, a majority of the confined labourers are recruited from the places of their origin. These workers are





Due to the unavailability of natives, migrant workers were even found engaged as torch bearers in a temple during the yearly festival in Ernakulam district.

## Work Environment

Similar to the rest of the major destinations in the country, labour migrants to Kerala too have come to take up vocations that native workers often avoid. Most of these low-skilled, low-valued jobs call for arduous physical labour and put workers at elevated risk of exposure to accidents, injuries and even death. A majority of the migrant workers are unaware about the protective measures to be undertaken while being engaged in hazardous occupations. They are constantly exposed to excessive heat, dust, poisonous gases, pollutants and other vulnerable situations that heighten their morbidity and mortality in the long run.

A significant proportion of migrant workers do not have the required preventive gears that could reduce health risks. Helmets, masks, chest guards, gloves, shoes, thermal insulators, safety nets and life jackets are seldom provided to migrant workers. Migrants' lack of awareness and the resultant complacency are used to their advantage by the employers, who perceive such investments as 'unnecessary'. Besides, the emergency response systems at such workplaces generally tend to be weak or nominal.

Also, the eight-hour work schedule is seldom made applicable for the migrants who on an average work for ten to twelve hours, many times without being paid overtime charges. And overtime charges if paid, would be nominal. The workplaces of migrants

also generally lack sufficient rest rooms, lockers, first aid or ventilation and lighting for that matter.

By outsourcing a work to a contractor, the manufacturer escapes the responsibility of providing workers the statutory benefits. Informal employment many times results in non-payments, part-payments or paying wages lesser than verbally agreed upon. The aggrieved workers, given their limited access to information and mechanisms set up to redress their grievances are often compelled to make compromises on their wages.

It was found that employers do not adhere to most of the labour legislations in the case of migrant workers. The Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 is applicable to only a section of the migrant workers in Kerala as a majority of them are recruited while they are in Kerala. Besides, the law has not been strictly enforced. Similar is the case with most of the other legislations intended as a social protection for labourers.

The trade unions in Kerala are yet to undertake significant action to mainstream the migrant workers.<sup>xvii, xviii</sup> Despite all these, Kerala offers the best wage rates in the country and relatively better working environment to the migrant workers compared to a lot of industrial states in the India. During the fieldwork undertaken as part of the study, the existence of child labour on a large scale was neither observed nor was reported by the Key Informants.

mostly confined to the places they work and the accommodation they are provided.

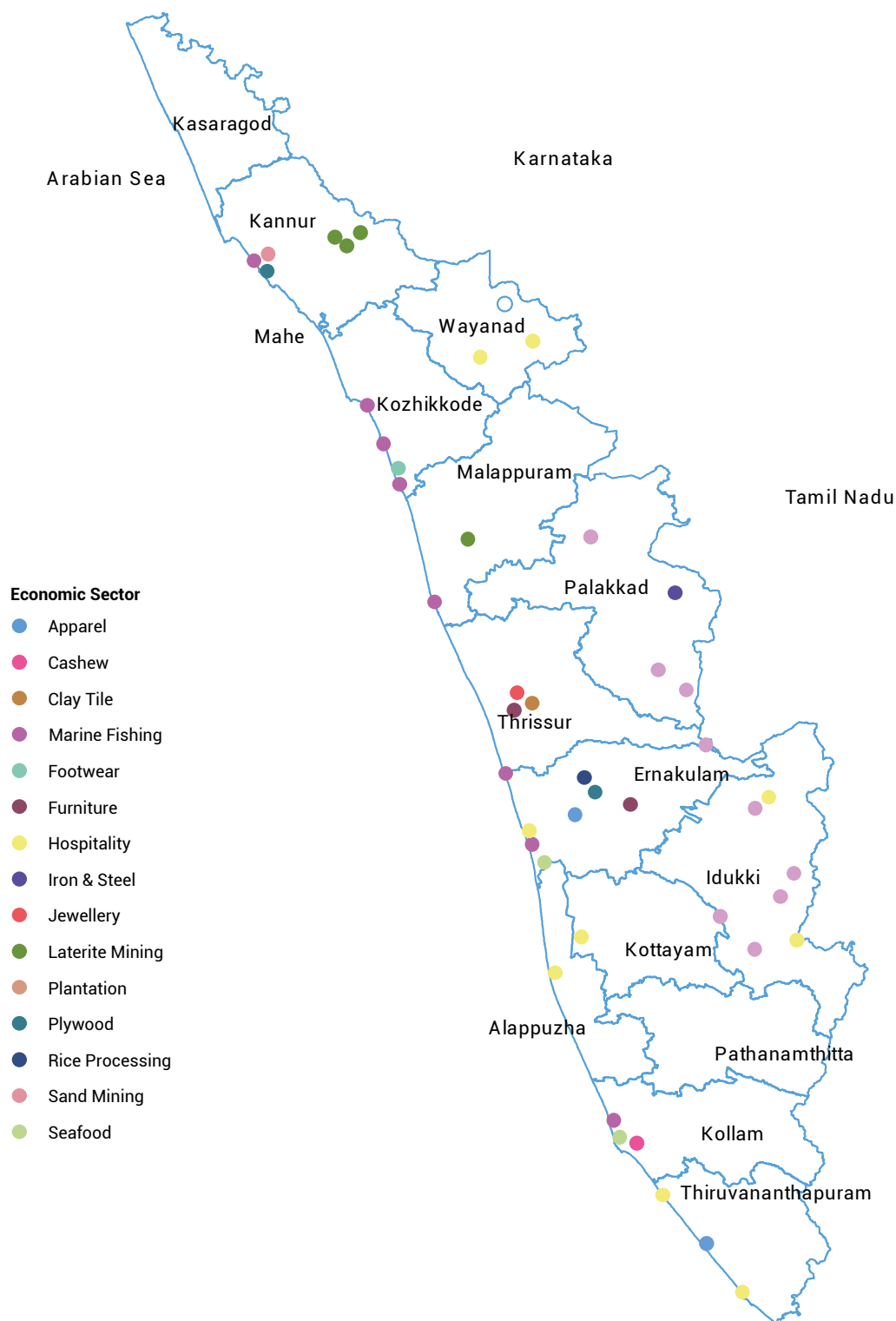
Workers engaged in the major construction sites come under this category. These workers are herded from place to place as the company takes up newer projects. Another way of making workers confined is by custody their election ID cards or other proofs of identity without which the labourers cannot move out. Part payment is also a strategy employed by employers in Kerala to keep their workers confined for long periods.



# Economic Sectors



Figure. 15: Disribution of Economic Sectors in Kerala that Heavily Engage Migrant Labour, 2016-17



Data Source: CMID Field Survey, 2016-2017







## Construction

In Kerala construction provides employment to the largest proportion of workers from outside the state. Vizhinjam Port, rail track doubling and modernisation of railway stations in Kottayam district, Kochi Metro Rail, expansion of Kochi Refinery, Kannur airport, expansion of Kochi airport, Information Technology Parks in Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi, Solar Park and Central University in Kasaragod, roads, including national highways in various districts, check dams, regulators and flyovers were some of the government commissioned construction projects in the state which engaged migrant workers during the period of fieldwork.

Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode districts are the major construction hubs in Kerala. Even in remote areas across all districts, migrant workers are engaged in construction work. However, there is a marked difference in the dynamics by type of the constructions involved, and it can be broadly classified into two streams.

### Large Scale Construction

National and multinational companies that undertake large scale constructions employ migrant labourers for most of their skilled and unskilled work. Workers are mobilised from the source states through a network of contractors and agents, sometimes by paying money in advance. The majority of the workers engaged in such works are young single men from backward communities in rural areas, predominantly from Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal. These workers are generally provided free accommodation and transport to the work sites. In many cases they are housed at the construction site itself.

Temporary labour camps made of corrugated sheets, typical of the construction sector all over India, can be found at major construction sites in Kerala also. Among the unskilled workers in the construction sector in Kerala, those who work on the large scale construction sites get the lowest wages. Their wage is around Rs 300 per day, which is comparable to the national average.

### Minor Construction

Migrant workers involved in minor construction are more or less footloose. A sizeable proportion of these workers are recruited from the labour *naka*. Workers from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and several other states are hired in such a manner. The migrant workers in small construction sites get higher daily wages compared to those in the larger construction sites, ranging from Rs 400 to Rs 650 and even beyond, for unskilled work. Most workers in the construction sector are not registered with the Kerala Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board.





Savanah R. S.

## Marine Fishing

Like several other sectors in the state, marine fishing too faces acute labour crunch. While there is an attrition from the labour force as senior fishers retire, very few young men from the state join the force as they do not find fishing an attractive means of livelihood anymore. The shortage of labour is hence addressed by engaging workers from other states. Traditional fishers from five Indian states were found engaged in marine fishing from the Kerala coast during 2016-17. Most fishers were engaged by the trawlers. But migrants were also found working on other types of boats.

Fisher folk from Sundarbans region in West Bengal, Puri, Khordha, Cuttack and Balasore districts on the Odisha coast, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts in coastal Andhra Pradesh, Udupi district in Karnataka, and Kanyakumari, Cuddalore, Thoothukudi and Ramanathapuram districts in Tamil Nadu work on boats that operate from the Kerala coast. Besides the traditional fishers, men from several districts in Assam and West Bengal, with no prior experience in fishing, are also employed by the owners of fishing boats.

Fishers from Tamil Nadu, particularly from Kanyakumari district, have been historically present across the harbours in the state. Known for their exceptional fishing skills as well as their willingness to undertake deep sea fishing expeditions, fishers from Kanyakumari captain most of the trawlers that operate from Kerala. Colachel in Kanyakumari and Rameswaram in Ramanathapuram are two major pockets in Tamil Nadu from where fishers come to Kerala.

Fisher folk from the Mangalore region operate from harbours such as Azhikkal (Kannur) in northern Kerala. Fishers from Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts in Andhra Pradesh were also found employed on boats that operate from Azhikkal. The migrant fisher folk from all states found working in Kerala were men and most of them had been hired through their social network.

Traditional Hindu fishers from Kakdwip in the Sundarbans region of South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal operate from several Kerala harbours. The chance of earning a better income has tempted most of these workers to travel thousands of kilometres to work in Kerala. They cited the exploitation by boat owners in their native places as another reason for moving to Kerala. The fishers from Odisha found working here were mostly from Balasore, Cuttack, Khordha and Puri. According to them, the presence of turtles (Olive Ridley) made it 'risky' to operate from the Odisha coast.

Migrant fisher families from Hunsuru in Mysuru district were found engaged in inland fishing in their coracles in Chittoor, Vaduthala and Thoppumpady areas in Ernakulam district. They live in tents near the water bodies and move from place to place. A group of 30 people, including men, women and children were found camping under the Thoppumpady Bridge on the Willingdon Island.



## Plywood

The plywood sector is one of the first few economic sectors in Kerala which witnessed labour migration from beyond southern India. The industry in Kerala is primarily concentrated in Kunnathunadu taluk in Ernakulam district with Perumbavoor as its nerve centre. Valapattanam in Kannur district is the other major plywood industry hub in the state. One of the oldest and the largest plywood manufacturing units in India is in Valapattanam.

The industry began flourishing in Kerala with the collapse of the plywood sector in Assam which had the monopoly in India. A Supreme Court intervention in 1996 resulted in the ban of forest-based plywood production in northeastern India, particularly in Assam. Kerala, particularly Perumbavoor, gained from this opportunity, leveraging the availability of rubber wood for plywood production. It is migrants from Odisha, Assam and West Bengal who mainly work in the plywood industry in Kerala.

The economy of Perumbavoor depends on plywood industry which is literally run by migrant workers. There are hundreds of units that produce veneer, plywood and block boards, located mainly in Vengola, Rayamangalam, Vazhakkulam and Asamannoor panchayats and in the Perumbavoor municipality. Valapattanam has a cluster of plywood and allied industrial units on the Azhikkal - Valapattanam Road.

Except quality control, most of the skilled and unskilled work is carried out by migrant workers who are informal employees. Skilled work such as setting and pressing the veneer layers at high temperature and pressure is generally done by workers from Assam. Work is also outsourced to a migrant contractor on piece rate by factory owners. The contractor engages workers through his social network.

Most workers are young single men. However, migrant women are also employed in some factories for unskilled work such as clipping veneer layers. Bachelor workers are provided free accommodation on the factory premises or nearby areas.

The estimated number of workers in this sector in and around Perumbavoor is about 72,000. Kandhamal, Dhenkanal, Kendrapara and Kalahandi in Odisha, Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur in Assam, and Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar in West Bengal are some of the districts of origin of the migrant workers in Perumbavoor. Workers from Dharmaji, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam, and Jajpur, Bhadrak and Dhenkanal districts in Odisha were found in Valapattanam.





Savanah R. S.

## Plantations

Tea, cardamom, pepper, coffee and rubber are the major plantation crops in Kerala. Except rubber, the plantation sector historically depended on migrant labourers from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Tea, cardamom, pepper and coffee plantations are mainly concentrated in Idukki and Wayanad districts. The reluctance of the younger generation from Tamil Nadu in doing traditional jobs paved the way for migrants from other states to enter the labour market. Though the Tamil speaking population is still a major component of the workforce, migrants, particularly from eastern and northeastern India can now be found in the plantations.

The origin of workers differed from place to place, however the study found that a significant proportion of the workers were from the Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and minority communities. Although the migrants from far off Indian states are not skilled enough to work in plantations, the shortage of labour has been forcing plantation managements to hire them.

Unlike many sectors where single male migrants dominate the workforce, the plantation sector has predominantly migrant families working in it. Plantations tend to hire families as they are less likely to move on quickly compared to single men. Because of the large number of migrant families, there are a significant number of migrant children in plantation areas.

In Idukki, the Peerumedu taluk had migrants mostly from Assam, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. Most of the labourers in Udumbanchola taluk were from Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar. Tea plantations in Devikulam taluk have migrant workers mostly from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam. People of the Oraon tribe in Jharkhand constitute a major share of the workforce in the tea plantations of Munnar.

The study found workers from Dindori at plantations in Mannarkkad, Palakkad. Migrants from 24 Parganas, Medinipur and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal, and Nagaon in Assam have also been documented. Natives of Murshidabad in West Bengal work in Nelliampathy hills.

Toddy tappers from Coimbatore and Erode districts of Tamil Nadu work in the coconut groves at Kozhijampara. Workers from Karnataka are very common in the farm lands in Wayanad. Most of these workers are from neighbouring Chamarajanagar and Mysuru districts. People from Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu also work in the plantations in Wayanad. Estates in Malakkappara in Thrissur district have workers from Jharkhand, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Odisha in addition to Tamil and Malayali labourers.



## Mining and Quarrying

### Granite Stone

Pathanamthitta, Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Palakkad and Kannur districts have numerous such quarries. However, during the assessment period it was found that a majority of them remained dormant due to government restrictions. Koodal in Pakkandam, Kalanjoor in Athirunkal, Erathu in Puthusseribhagam and Vadasserikkara are some of the major quarrying spots in Pathanamthitta, whereas Mukkunnimala is a major mining area in Thiruvananthapuram.

Cheenikkuzhy, Pettamala, Thiruvaniyoor, Koothattukulam, Parakkadav, Karukutty, Puliyanam, Mookkannoor and Malayattoor are some of the locations of quarries in Ernakulam district. Thrithala in Palakkad is another quarrying site. Almost all quarries depend on migrant labourers. Mainly single men from West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar were employed in quarries.

### Laterite Stone

Laterite mining is one of the major economic sectors in Kannur. Laterite is also mined in Malappuram and Kasaragod districts. The work involves heavy physical labour in a dusty environment. Migrant workers from Assam and Karnataka were found to be in a majority in this work. In Kannur, most of the laterite mining is concentrated in Iritty and Thalipparamba taluks. Urathoor, Blathoor, Kalliad, Nuchiyad, Kurumathoor and Ulikkal are some of the mining pockets.

Migrants from Assam were found to be in a majority in the laterite mining sector. A lot of them were from Scheduled Tribe communities. Kokrajhar, Dhubri, BARPETA and Bongaigaon districts in Assam were the native places of workers. Migrant workers from Karnataka engaged in the laterite mining sector were predominantly from the northern Karnataka districts of Dharwad, Belagavi and Davangere, and also from Udupi. Those engaged in operating digging and excavation equipment were from Tamil Nadu.

In Malappuram, laterite mining units are spread across most of the taluks. Indianoor, near Kottackal, and Melmuri, near Malappuram town, are some of the mining areas the study team visited. In Kasaragod, laterite mining takes place mainly in Hosdurg, Kasaragod and Vellarikkund taluks.

### Sand Mining

Sand mining on the Valapattanam side of the Valapattanam River engages migrant labourers in large numbers. Poythumkadavu, which is a core dredging and mining area, has migrant workers from Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. They lived in rented rooms and houses in and around Poythumkadavu. They reportedly start work very early in the morning and earn up to Rs 1,000 a day or even more.





Benoy Peter

## Hospitality

Kerala is a major tourist destination for both domestic as well as international tourists. Kerala's hospitality industry which includes both governmental and private establishments is well developed and caters to millions of visitors every year. Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Idukki, Ernakulam and Wayanad are some of the districts with significant tourist inflow.

Internationally renowned luxury brands to home stays can be spotted at almost all the tourist hotspots in Kerala. Except government-run establishments, hotels ranging from international brands with five star facilities to street food shops engage migrant workers, predominantly men. Migrant women also work in this sector.

Workers from northeastern Indian states and Nepal are predominantly engaged in the lobby, restaurants and housekeeping sections in luxury hotels. Workers from Darjeeling district in West Bengal were also found working in these areas. Workers from other states are generally engaged in other low-skilled work where there is limited customer interaction, for example cleaning plates.

Many of the luxury hotels in Kerala have tie-ups with skill training institutes in the east and northeastern parts of the country and recruit trainees and workers through these institutes. These workers are generally provided accommodation by the hotel managements.

Vythiri, Sulthanbathery and Kalpetta in Wayanad; Kumarakom in Kottayam; Alappuzha town; Nedumbassery and Kochi Corporation in Ernakulam; Munnar, Kumaly, Vagamon, Suryanelli and Idukki in Idukki district, Kazhakkootam bypass, Kovalam, Poovar, Varkala and Thiruvananthapuram city are some of the hotspots where resorts and luxury hotels are clustered.

Migrants from all northeastern Indian states were found employed in the hospitality industry in Kerala. There were migrants working in the houseboats in Alappuzha as well.



## Iron and Steel

Iron and steel industry was one of the first few sectors in Kerala that engaged male workers from eastern India significantly. This sector is located predominantly in Palakkad while there are also factories situated sporadically in Kozhikode and Ernakulam districts. Industrial units in Palakkad district are concentrated in the Industrial Development Area (IDA) and the New Industrial Development Area (NIDA) in Kanjikode.

These units produce iron/steel rods, bars, pipes, ingots and other allied products, mainly from scrap iron. The industry emerged as a cluster during the nineties and initially depended on workers from Bihar. Currently migrants predominantly from Bihar and Odisha work in Kanjikode. Workers from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were also found here.

Like in most of the industrial settings, single workers live on the factory premises and workers with families live outside. Buxar, Nalanda, Vaishali, East Champaran in Bihar, and Ganjam, Mayurbhanj and Kendujhar in Odisha are some of the districts from where migrants come to work in the iron and steel industry. While a majority of the workers were young, there were also middle aged men from several states working in the industry.





## Textile and Apparel

The textile and apparel sector other than handlooms, employs migrant workers. Industrial units are concentrated in the Apparel Park under the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation at Meenamkulam in Thiruvananthapuram district and Kizhakkambalam in Ernakulam district. There are units in other parts of Ernakulam district also, including the Kalamassery Industrial Park.

This sector employs mainly women and girls from Odisha, Jharkhand and northeastern states. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya are the states from where these workers hail. Workers from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal were also found, but in fewer numbers.

Migrant workers are sourced through an initiative of the National Skill Development Corporation. Accommodation facility is provided. The Meenamkulam Apparel Park has a hostel for single women. Women with children and families live outside the park.

Balangir, Malkangiri, Sundargarh, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Nabarangpur and Rayagada are some of the districts from where Odiya workers in the sector come to work. Lohardaga, Godda, Ranchi, Sahibganj, Gumla, Khunti, Simdega, Pakur and West Singhbhum were some of the source districts in Jharkhand. Sivasagar, Karbi Anglong, Udalguri, Tinsukia, Karimganj, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Baksa, Barpeta, Golaghat and Kamrup are some of the districts in Assam from where workers come here. The presence of tribal women in large numbers is indicated as the source districts of these women and girls are some of the districts with a large proportion of tribal people.



## Wooden Furniture

Craftsmen from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, globally renowned for wood carving, work in the wooden furniture sector. One of the major clusters in this sector is in Nellikuzhi near Kothamangalam in Ernakulam district. A sizeable proportion of these highly skilled workers are Muslims and they have been working at Nellikuzhi for several years. Workers from Uttarakhand state, which shares its border with Saharanpur, were also found in Nellikuzhi.

Several of the migrants from Saharanpur are entrepreneurs who run their own workshops at rented premises. The local furniture outlets provide these entrepreneurs wood and take the product back paying labour charges. Many of the workers live in Nellikuzhi along with their families. About 25 children from such migrant families were found studying in the Government High School Nellikuzhi during the academic year 2016-2017.

Workers from Saharanpur were also found in furniture production units in Kasaragod and Malappuram. In the cane furniture work, men from Assam dominate. There are also workers from Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal in the cane furniture sector.





Savanah R. S.

## Other Sectors

There were several other sectors which also engage migrant workers to a large extent. Footwear, seafood, gold jewellery making and rice processing include some of them. The profile of workers varied in each sector.

### Footwear

Along the Ramanattukara – Nallalam stretch, there are several industrial units in the footwear value chain which employ migrant workers, mostly from eastern and northern Indian states. A footwear major in Kerala, which has several units along this stretch, employs workers predominantly from Bihar. There are also workers from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Purnia, Madhepura, Champaran, Sitamarhi, Samastipur, Araria, Saran, Madhubani, Kishanganj and Katihar are some of the districts in Bihar from where workers are recruited to the footwear industry.

### Seafood

The seafood industry in Alappuzha and Kollam engages migrant workers predominantly, particularly women and girls from east and northeast India. Neendakara as well as Sakthikulangara in Kollam district and Aroor in Alappuzha district are major clusters in the seafood sector. Women and girls from Assam, Karnataka, Odisha and Jharkhand work in the industry. There are also boys from these states. A lot of these workers are from various backward communities.

### Others

The healthcare sector has started engaging migrant workers in large numbers. Hospitals run by Christian missionary organisations perhaps initiated this by recruiting boys and girls from places in the east and northeast India where missions have significant presence. These workers are provided accommodation. A lot of hospitals now engage migrant workers.

The jewellery-making units in Kerala have highly skilled migrant workers from West Bengal and Maharashtra. Thrissur and Kozhikode are the two major hubs of gold jewellery making. The rice processing industry in Kalady in Ernakulam district engages workers from Odisha, West Bengal and several other states.

A lot of beauty parlours across the districts have women from northeastern India working in them. Saloons have men from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Nepali men work as security staff. Migrants from Tamil Nadu are engaged in ironing clothes, going from house to house with a mobile cart.

# Living Conditions

The study found that the living arrangements of migrant workers varied depending upon whether the migrants came with their families or not. It also depended on the nature of jobs as well as the sector they were employed in. The *naka*-based labourers lived in rented accommodations they could afford. Families with children preferred affordable rented houses in the peripheries of the cities. Families without children, particularly couples from Tamil Nadu who left the children behind at native places, stayed in rented rooms.

Vathuruthy in Kochi is a typical example of housing of single as well as migrant families, particularly from Tamil Nadu. Tamil families are clustered in Elamakkara also. Migrant families tried to stay together at places where other such families were present. Clusters of families from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar can be found at Kanjikode area in Palakkad, Nellikuzhi near Kothamangalam and Binanipuram in Ernakulam. Families from Assam and West Bengal were found clustered in several panchayats around Perumbavoor in Ernakulam.

Single male migrants lived in crowded rooms, paying exorbitant rents, mostly in buildings exclusively housing migrant workers. In Kozhikode and Malappuram such facilities are popularly known as *quarters*. All the districts in the state have such buildings rented out to migrant workers. Five to eight workers live in a typical room paying rents ranging from Rs 600 to Rs 1200 or even more

per person. However, almost all these were permanent (*pukka*) structures though some were dilapidated. Such buildings can be found in Chattanchal in Kasaragod, Maruthonkara Road in Kuttiyadi, Nambisan Pady in Malappuram, Pattambi in Palakkad, Adivadu in Ernakulam and Paippad in Kottayam. There are places such as Poythumkadavu in Kannur and Kandanthara in Perumbavoor where a cluster of houses and multi-storey buildings house single male migrants as well as migrant families.

Migrant workers in the large scale construction sector lived on the construction sites or nearby at the facilities provided by the employer. Given the temporary nature of construction work, most of these facilities were makeshift shelters made of corrugated sheets, typical of the construction sector all over India. Migrants in the marine fishing sector lived on the boats or in rented rooms near the fish landing centres.

Those who worked in factories lived in the free/subsidised accommodation provided by factory owners. The iron and steel sector, and plywood sector had accommodation facilities for single male workers attached to the factory. Single women in the apparel and seafood industries lived in hostels provided by the employers within or near the campus. The apparel park in Thiruvananthapuram provided accommodation within the park to single women, whereas women with families stayed outside. The park also had a crèche. The plantations have residential quarters for the

migrant families. The brick kilns also accommodated the families of workers within the premises.

The study found several migrant workers from the neighbouring states spending the night on pavements in many places in Kasaragod and Wayanad districts. Cherkkala in Kasaragod and Meenangadi in Wayanad had workers from Karnataka who lived on pavements. In Ernakulam district, men and women from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh were found sleeping on pavements in Kaloore which has one of the oldest and largest labour *nakas* in Kochi. Almost 80 people were found sleeping on the pavements at Kaloore junction and in the Kaloore private bus stand.

Workers from Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu, who cleaned septic tanks, lived on pavements in Mayannoor, Palakkad as they had been evicted from their shacks on the railway land near the Mayannoor Bridge. Inland fisher families from Hunsuru in Mysuru district lived in their tents on the government land near the backwaters in Kochi city.

Most of the migrants lived in congested camps in cramped rooms with limited lighting and ventilation. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities were generally poor. Most rooms visited had no separate kitchen and people used diesel, which was easily available, as the cooking fuel. Kerosene or cooking gas was neither affordable nor available at convenience. A lot of people also depended on mess/canteens run by fellow migrants for food.



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Most of the migrants lived in cramped rooms in congested camps with limited lighting and ventilation. There was no separate kitchen and people used diesel, as the cooking fuel. Kerosene or cooking gas was neither affordable nor available at convenience while diesel was easily available.

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നാടൻ കളി  
তাড়ী  
তোধয়

## Networking

The distribution of source districts and the migration patterns reveal the strong influence of social network in migration to Kerala.

### Migration Decision Making

The migration patterns reveal the strong influence of social networking in the migration decision making process. Except those who were recruited by the construction companies which undertake major projects in Kerala, those who were sourced by the apparel industry through government initiatives for skill development, and those who were recruited to the plantations or seafood industry, a majority of the migrants had come to Kerala influenced by either a family member, a relative, a friend or a villager. Spatial clustering of source districts from the major source states endorses this.

The corridors connecting Kerala with source states explain how social network has been beneficial for the potential migrants. It is those who have relatives in India who come to Kerala for work from Bangladesh. The visit to Murshidabad district in West Bengal which is connected by a major corridor with Ernakulam district, revealed that a significant number of young men from Domkal, Islampur and Jalangi in Murshidabad were either in Kerala, or had been in Kerala in the recent past, or are getting ready to come to Kerala for work.

### Work and Life

Migrant workers whose place of origin is the same, generally stayed together, in the same room, in the same building or at the same place. Networking was

strong among such people. They lived together, travelled together and worked together. Except in places such as Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district with a market catering to the requirement of migrant workers, they limited themselves to the workplace and place of stay. Those who were free to move around on a holiday, particularly young single men, went out to the nearby city. Badagara in Kozhikode, Ambalamugal and Perumbavoor in Ernakulam were places where Sunday outing was quite visible. Sunday outing was also seen in Thrissur, Kottayam and Thiruvananthapuram districts.

There were distinct residential pockets where workers from a state, or even a region within the state stayed. Thekkemala in Pathanamthitta was found to be a residential pocket of workers from Tamil Nadu. A pocket of workers from Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand was found in Nedumkandam in Idukki district. Vellimadukunnu in Kozhikode is an area where there was concentration of workers from West Bengal, especially those from Bardhaman. Families from Rajasthan were clustered in and around Ayyappankavu in Ernakulam. Muslim workers from Rohilkhand region in Uttar Pradesh were found to work in several fish landing centres in Kerala.

Ethnic distinctions were prominent even at the labour *nakas*. The Kasaragod new private bus stand *naka* was dominated by workers from North Karnataka. The traffic junction *naka* near the District Stationery Office in Kasaragod had men and women exclusively from Tamil Nadu, particularly from Viluppuram and

Thanjavur. At Tirur in Malappuram district, there were geographic demarcations of the *naka* and workers were conscious about it. Workers from Tamil Nadu, mostly from Viluppuram and Tiruchirappalli, waited in front of the private bus stand, and workers from West Bengal waited at the Masjid Bazar area.

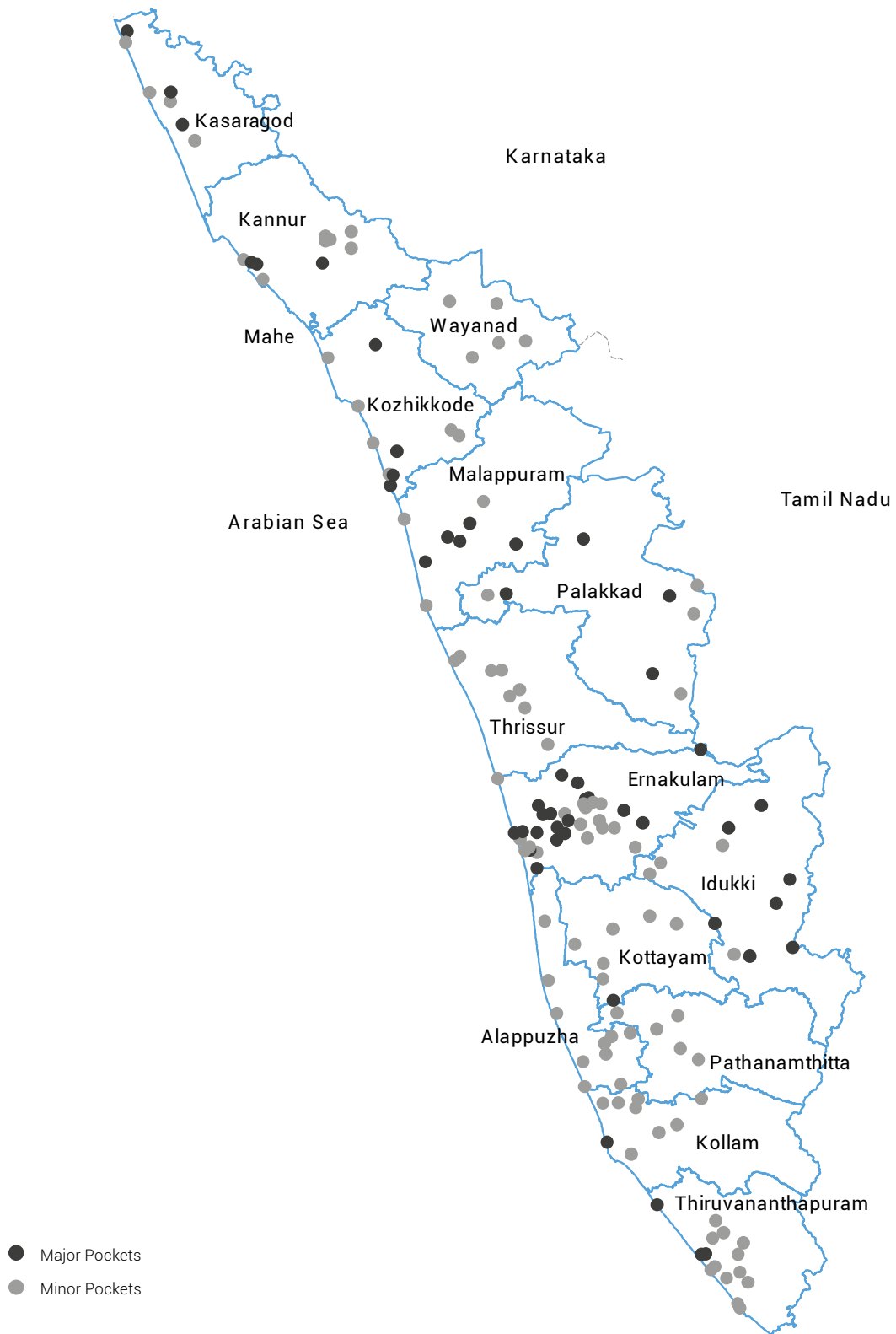
The effect of networking on recruitment was also evident in the sector of employment. Bengali Muslims from Assam and West Bengal along with workers from Odisha were the majority in the plywood sector in Ernakulam while Hindu men from Assam dominated the laterite mining clusters in Kannur along with workers from north Karnataka. While generally there was limited interaction between the natives and the migrants who worked together, in the marine fishing sector workers were found spending considerable time together-working, living and cooking-on the boat during the trips.

### Host Community Interaction

While social networking is strong among the migrants, there is limited interaction with the host community beyond business transactions and employee-employer relationships. A lot of the employers and Keralite contractors who have been engaging the same workers for years together, often do not know the names of these workers and address them as *Bhai* or *Annan* depending on whether they are from north India or Tamil Nadu.



Figure. 16: Disribution of Migrant Pockets in Kerala, 2016-17



Data Source: CMID Field Survey, 2016-2017







## Inclusion

Even in Kerala, akin to most of the major migrant destinations in the country, migrant workers experienced discrimination, harassment and exploitation, albeit, at lower levels, according to the workers. Although the Government of Kerala has taken proactive measures for the welfare of migrants, they are yet to be pragmatic and firmly rooted in grassroots realities.

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## Government Response`

Despite being a recent entrant as a major migrant destination in India, Kerala has been proactive in its response to workers from other states. However, most of the measures conceived have not demonstrated significant impact in the absence of a migrant-sensitive design.

The first comprehensive attempt for the welfare of migrant workers in the state, the Kerala Migrant Workers' Welfare Scheme, was rolled out in 2010 through the Kerala Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board. The scheme offered financial support for treatment of migrants for ailments, grant for their children's education

in Kerala and retirement benefits to those who completed five years under the scheme. There are also provisions for compensation to the enrolled workers on disability, compensation to survivors upon death of a worker, and allowances for repatriation of the body. However, the scheme did not find many takers as only a limited effort was put in to create a demand for it. It was also smothered by the complex processes involved for enrolment and renewals. Besides, the benefits did not take into account the grassroots realities and requirements of migrant workers.

In 2013, the Department of Labour and Skills commissioned a study to

understand the situation of migrant workers in the state. This study offered an estimate of migrant workers and provided some evidence for policy debates. In 2016, the Kerala State Planning Board constituted a working group to formulate recommendations for the welfare of migrant workers under the thirteenth five-year plan (2017-2022). Perhaps it was for the first time in India that a state had set up a Working Group on Labour Migration as part of the five-year plan. A stakeholders' consultation on labour migration was also organised in 2017 as part of developing an action plan for the Department of Labour and Skills.

Kerala Migrant  
Workers' Welfare  
Scheme

2010

2013

Study on Migrant  
Labour in Kerala





# on on Labour Migration to Kerala

ment of Labour and Skills  
ional Labour Organization

rishnan, Hon. Minister for Labour and Excise

2017-Thiruv



Leejan Mariadas

2016

Working Group on  
Labour Migration

Thirteenth Five Year  
Plan (2017-2022)

2017

Stakeholders'  
Consultation on  
Labour Migration to  
Kerala

Targeted Interventions under the Kerala State AIDS Control Society reached out to a segment of the migrant workers with HIV prevention, care and support services in most of the districts. There have been ad hoc efforts by the health systems to reach out to migrant workers given their vulnerability. The Valapattanam Primary Health Centre in Kannur district had a sign board in Hindi. Several public health facilities in Ernakulam district also attempted to reach out to migrants

through multilingual messages. In Kozhikode and Ernakulam, the District Medical Offices have been leading such initiatives.

The Department of Labour and Skills also organises health camps at major migrant pockets. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Kerala has appointed volunteers in select schools to address the language barrier. The State Literacy Mission is piloting a programme in Perumbavoor with the aim of making the migrant workers in the state literate in Malayalam and Hindi.

While there are several positive measures, there have been stigmatising activities also on the part of the government. For example, the raids by the Excise Department under the code name, Operation *Bhai*, during 2016 portrayed a negative image of migrant workers. And ad hoc attempts to register workers and issue them identity cards are being undertaken by the police in several districts.



# Access to Healthcare

Compounding their high vulnerability to health risks given the nature of their jobs, the migrant workers have limited access to quality healthcare due to various reasons.

## Seeking Treatment

For a migrant worker, his/her day starts very early and ends late in the evening, limiting their access to certified health providers. Even the *naka*-based labourers, who generally work only eight hours a day, have to reach the *naka* as early as 6.00am in order to secure work and reach the worksite by 8.00am to commence the work. To access the free government health systems which are open during the day, these workers will have to forgo at least a day's wage and getting leave from the employer is also not easy. Moreover, many of the workers do not even know where the public health institutions are located.

For plantation workers who stay in remote areas, the access to health services is limited unless their employer took the lead in making it available to them. All over the state, their work, lack of awareness about health facilities, language constraints coupled with inconvenient timings of the government facilities, have crippled the migrants' access to quality healthcare. Hence they tend to purchase medicines over the counter from pharmacies at a time convenient to them. At places such as Perumbavoor, uncertified health providers were seen on the streets on Sundays catering to the requirement of migrant workers.

## Diagnosis

Language has been a significant barrier for the migrant workers as well as the healthcare providers. Workers from Odisha, Assam and West Bengal found it more severe than those from the Hindi speaking regions.

Although several doctors manage to communicate in Hindi, their proficiency in Hindi has not been adequate enough to comprehend the presented complaints or to elicit his/her medical history in order to arrive at a proper diagnosis. Besides, in a public health setting where they have to attend to a long queue of patients, doctors found it difficult to invest much time in communicating to a patient who speaks a different language.

The migrant workers found it difficult to get prescribed tests done at labs outside and often failed to return to hospitals with lab reports. And hospitals also found it challenging to follow up with the patients given their floating nature.

The practice of approaching uncertified providers, including pharmacies, often leads to migrants missing the critical early diagnosis and treatment. This results a chronic cough for more than two weeks, which requires a sputum test and perhaps Directly Observed Treatment Short course (DOTS), getting treated by a cough syrup.

## Treatment

Once their health situations deteriorate significantly after having tried several options, the migrant workers finally return to their native places or approach

the healthcare providers in Kerala.

Several employers have sent their workers home after they found them to be completely ill, to get rid of the burden. Many migrants who required hospitalised treatment have hesitated to do so in the absence of caregivers. A co-worker may have to stay back with the patient compromising his/her wages, which for him/her is a difficult choice unless he/she is a close relative.

Hospitals have also been found to be reluctant to admit migrant workers in the absence of caregivers. Several migrant workers who have met with accidents when brought to private hospitals have been redirected to other hospitals unless his employer took the responsibility of paying the bills.

According to health officials, tracking cases that required follow-up visits and tests was a major challenge. Once they found that there was some relief, many workers discontinued treatment. Migrant workers who consulted hospitals have often found it difficult to comprehend the dosage of medication required as the medicine is given from the pharmacy with directions on dosage and administration written in the Malayalam language.

In Perumbavoor there have been incidents when pregnant women from migrant families were rushed to the hospital after home delivery had proved unsuccessful. In the absence of the history of the pregnancy, health facilities have found it challenging to address such cases.





# Financial Inclusion

There is limited information available on the financial inclusion of migrant workers. A majority of the workers received their wages in cash. Their access to mainstream banking is limited due to a number of reasons. The access to financial products such as insurance and credit is also negligible. Without local address proof, banks are known to have hesitated to open new accounts at the destination. People who did not have bank accounts have had challenges in keeping wages in safe custody. They have often kept it with themselves or with a confidant. Most facilities did not have lockers for workers. Hence those who did not have bank accounts kept cash in larger denominations as that was easier to keep in their pockets.

Those who have been working with the same employer for long entrusted their money with the employer or drew the wages only when they were about to leave for their native places. Most of the migrant workers had some means

to remit money to the native place. Workers used money transfer facilities available through shops. There were informal mechanisms also. Agents collected money at the destination and delivered it at the native place taking a commission. It was more convenient for the workers than depending on banks as the money was quickly delivered at the door steps of the worker.

Transferring money through someone else's account was another common practice. For this, they charged Rs 200 per Rs 10,000 in Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district. Workers from Bangladesh transferred the money to West Bengal or Assam through informal channels and then from there to Bangladesh.

Those who have their own bank accounts, had accounts mostly at their native places. The illiterate migrants who had accounts went to the bank to deposit money as they didn't know how to use the Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs). Except those who had multiple

shifts, workers had to forgo a day's wage to deposit money in the bank as banks are not open on Sundays. Some of the workers sought assistance from others to deposit money through CDMs. CDMs are few in numbers and are often limited to urban areas. Hence, workers have had to go to the nearest city and stand in queue to deposit money. There have been instances of these workers being cheated by others in the pretext of helping them to deposit money in their accounts. The ATMs have language choice of either Malayalam, English or Hindi. Hence migrants have found even withdrawing cash a difficult task.

However, there have been good migrant-friendly practices too. At Kanhangad traffic circle *naka* in Kasaragod, a representative of the Kottenchery Cooperative Society was found collecting deposits from migrant workers and issuing them receipts at 7.30 in the morning.

## Reasons for Migrants Returning En Masse Due to Demonetisation

Demonetisation had a negative impact on all industries, making them slow down or stagnant. This resulted in decline in production and overall availability of work. And migrants were affected the most, as less opportunity for work resulted in more competition, lesser negotiation power and agreeing to work for less.

Migrants were forced to accept the old currency and were asked to get it changed. This was also one way many employers got rid of their black money. The Rs 2,000 notes were not of utility as vendors were not able to tender change. People who did not have bank accounts could not deposit money in others' account given the restrictions in place during demonetisation.

Many people had cash in hand but could not convert it. They had no option but to take it to their native place and change it there. There was scarcity of money at their native places as the migrants were not able to send money home. Hence, going home and working there for a while was a crisis management strategy for many.

In the laterite mining centres at Indianoor in Malappuram, workers were asked to wait for a few weeks. Staying in Kerala without work was expensive given the cost for food, rent and other expenditure they were likely to incur which they could not afford. Several employers and contractors also recommended that the migrant workers go home as that would have helped them reduce maintenance expenses.



# Access to Education

Several children from migrant families study in various schools. For example, E.K.M Lower Primary School at Pasuppara in Idukki district had more than 140 students from Assam, Jharkhand and Bihar during the academic year 2016-17. There were more than 100 children from Assam and West Bengal studying at the Kandanthara Government Upper Primary School, near Perumbavoor, during the same period. All the students at Pallilankara Government Lower Primary School, near Kalamassery, during the academic year 2016-17 were children of migrant workers. Government High School, Binanipuram had more than 60 such students.

There were over 150 students enrolled in the Govt. Lower Primary School, Kanjikode and G.H.S. Kanjikode during the academic year 2016-17. A nursery school for children of migrant workers has been functioning at the premises of Keenpuram industrial estate at South Vazhakkulam for several years. Half of the kids enrolled in the Thandirikkal Colony Anganwadi in Binanipuram were children of migrant workers.

While a significant number of children of migrant workers had been enrolled in schools across the districts, the number of migrant children not attending schools could also be substantial. Unlike couples from Tamil Nadu who mostly leave their children behind with other family members in their native places to ensure that they attend school, migrant families from most other states have come here with their children. Families were found to migrate anytime during

the academic year. Plantations in remote locations in Idukki have several migrant children, not attending school. Presence of wild animals on the way to school and lack of transport were two important reasons in addition to the language barrier for migrant children in plantations.

While it was easy for children to be enrolled in primary classes, admitting older children was tough given the language constraints. A few schools in the state have resource teachers, who speak the mother tongue of migrant children, appointed by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). However, getting qualified teachers has been a challenge, especially as they are not paid well. Efforts were also on for sourcing textbooks in Bengali and other languages.

Retention of migrant children was a challenge the schools faced. The practice of not enrolling migrant children, who are likely to drop out, has also been reported. Such children were allowed to study in the schools but were invisible to the system and hence were never reported as dropouts when they stopped coming to school.

Many children who were enrolled in schools had no one to look after them between 7.30am and 9.30am as their parents left for work. In the afternoon also, from 4.00pm till 6 or 7pm, they were vulnerable as their parents returned from work only by this time. Parents/students and teachers have been having a tough time in communicating with each other. However, there have been schools in Ernakulam district which have made significant investment in the education

of migrant children with the support of SSA. But in several schools, teachers as well as other students discriminate children of migrant workers by referring to/addressing them as *Bhai Kutty*<sup>11</sup> instead of their names. Some government schools also were branded by the local community as *Bhai Schools* given the large number of migrant children in them. This has also served as a deterrent for the natives in sending their children to such schools.

A lot of children of migrant workers enrolled in school, particularly those from beyond south India, remained absent for long terms as they go visiting their native places. Many of them also drop out. But it is underreported as teachers hope these children would return to schools. There were other reasons also due to which dropouts went underreported.

A lot of children from Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe families did not get the benefits they were eligible for as their parents were unable to produce the relevant documents. There were several migrant workers who only knew that they were *Adivasi*<sup>12</sup> or *Harijan*<sup>13</sup>. However, they were not able to give information about the name of their caste or tribe.

Teachers from two high schools reported that many girl students from migrant families in high school classes expressed concerns about the family returning for ever to the native places. These girls feared that if the family returns, they may have to discontinue studies and are likely to be married off quickly.

11. A migrant kid

12. Member of a tribe in India

13. Member of a lower caste Hindu community





# Legal Inclusion

A kin to most of the major migrant destinations in the country, migrant workers in Kerala too have been experiencing discrimination and harassment, albeit, at lower intensity, according to migrant labourers who have also worked elsewhere. Most of the migrant accommodations charged disproportionately high rents vis-à-vis the facilities provided. The market charged them higher prices. For them, getting the balance of the fare in buses and autos on which they commuted was tough.

In many cases, these workers were not given the wages agreed to by their employers or contractors. Instances of part payment and non-payment have also been reported. In the absence of any written agreements or formal payments, it was difficult for the worker to produce evidence to claim his/her dues. Instances of forced detention and physical assaults have also been found.

Employers have adopted various strategies to retain these workers. A few employers have kept the identity cards of the workers in their custody so that they do not go away. There were workplaces where weekly or monthly payments are made during the middle of next week/month so that there is always some balance of the wages held back with the employer.

Several migrants do not even know their employers' whereabouts. Many, particularly *naka*-based labourers were familiar with their employer only by his/her face. The name and phone number of an employer are only

known to the workers who have been engaged by him/her for a long time. Tracing the Malayali employer later for balance payments was a difficult task as his/her whereabouts are not known to the worker. The language constraints of the migrant workers and their unfamiliarity with the place make such things very complicated.

Communication constraints prevent migrant workers, particularly those from beyond south India, from successfully negotiating their case. A lot of them revealed that the natives<sup>14</sup> would speak to them in Hindi while recruiting them for work or canvassing them as clients. But the moment a migrant negotiated or demanded justice, the conversation switched completely to abusive Malayalam, and the power dynamics changed.

Migrants have not significantly benefited from the various mechanisms set up in the state to redress their grievances. The extension activities of the government legal aid programme have not been reaching the migrants given the constraints in the system. In the absence intermediaries such as trade unions or NGOs providing legal aid to migrants, most of the grievances do not reach the police, court or the Department of Labour. The workers generally did not reach out to the police. The reasons included low level of legal literacy, lack of evidence and fear about a possible violent reprisal from the acquitted. Moreover, hailing from backward communities, many of the migrant workers have been habituated to oppression.

Even if complaints reach the authorities, here too language barrier prevents the grievances from being properly understood. One of the strategies of the police is not to register a formal complaint as that would prove to be a 'headache' at later stages to close the case. In addition to this, generally, the complaint would be against a native who was better connected and politically influential.

In the absence of local support, it would be difficult for a migrant who has been intercepted by the police to even obtain bail. Even in the case of wrong charges being filed, since access to legal aid is limited, there would be hardly anyone to help them obtain bail. Most of the migrant workers have not benefited from the Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 as they were recruited from Kerala by their employer or contractor. Besides, the enforcement of the Act has by and large been nominal across Indian states.

The limited awareness about workers' rights also was a barrier in accessing legal aid. These workers did not benefit from the Kerala Migrant Workers' Welfare Scheme 2010. The benefits under the scheme were also not sensitive to the requirements of the workers. Besides, enrolment had to be renewed every year and the procedure was not simple. Moreover, only workers earning less than Rs 7,500 are eligible for registration.

14. Including employers, contractors, vendors, auto drivers, etc.









## Conclusions

Kerala has emerged as one of the most promising destinations among the Indian states for migrant workers from major states in the country known for out-migration. Given the demographic scenario of the native population, shortage of labour, current penetration of migrant workers in the state and the precarious state of human development in the source regions, this migration is only likely to increase.

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The future of human development in Kerala is also dependent on how fast the migrant population catches up with the current level of development in the state. Given the level of saturation of most of the human development indicators, migrants' access or lack of access to products and services is likely to influence the overall achievements.

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- Kerala has emerged as one of the most promising destinations among the Indian states for migrant workers from many of the major states in India known for out-migration, particularly for those from eastern and northeastern states. Some of the longest migration corridors in India have evolved during the past two decades, connecting Kerala with Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. District level corridors have also emerged indicating the strong influence of social network in migration. The growing informalisation of work has resulted in almost all industries including public sector entities engaging migrant workers. Given the demographic scenario of the native population, shortage of labour, current penetration of migrant workers in the state and the precarious state of human development in the source regions, migration to Kerala is only likely to increase.
- Tamil Nadu continues to be one of the leading sources of footloose labour in Kerala. Their linguistic advantage has helped Tamil workers to get closer to the mainstream and establish niche areas in the labour market. The resulting invisibility coupled with the design constraint of the study commissioned by Department of Labour in 2013 created a perception that Tamil workers have almost moved out of the labour market in Kerala. As a result, programmes and policies for migrant workers miss to be sensitive to the requirements of workers from neighbouring states.
- In addition to the single men typical of long distance migration, families as well as single women from eastern and northeastern Indian states have come in significant numbers to work in Kerala. While the long distance migration of single women is more organised, both the social network and the intermediaries play a role in the migration of families from far off states except in the case of Bengali Muslims from West Bengal and Assam. Social network plays a predominant role in the case of Bengali Muslim families. The profile of workers varied by native place of the worker, location of employment as well as the sector in which he/she is engaged. The preferences of industries coupled with gender, social network as well as the skill set of the migrant by and large decided the profile of the migrants in a particular industry.
- Irrespective of the origin, the majority of the migrant workers appear to be from socially and educationally disadvantaged poor agrarian communities, whose livelihood opportunities in their





native places have been severely constrained by a multitude of factors including climate change, disasters like drought and floods, conflicts and oppression. The size of the migrant population in Kerala from tribal communities, Scheduled Castes and minorities seems to be fairly substantial.

- Kerala offered migrant workers better wages, sustained work opportunities and relatively better treatment compared to several other destinations. However, like the rest of India, their work hours were longer, arduous and hazardous, with significant impact on their health and wellbeing in the long run. The congested living conditions of the workers, although better compared to many of the urban destinations in India, accentuate their vulnerabilities. They continue to remain largely excluded from the social security benefits that the native workers enjoy.
- Compounding their vulnerability, the access of migrant workers and their families to quality healthcare in Kerala is constrained by the inconvenient timings of the public health institutions that coincide with the work hours of migrants, communication barriers of both the providers as well as the migrant workers, limited awareness of migrants about the available health

facilities, their poor social support system at the destination as well as their easy access to unauthorised healthcare providers.

- Given their poor financial literacy, the bank timings that coincide with the work timings of the migrants, discriminatory treatment by banking institutions, language constraints, their inability to use ATMs and CDMs, scarcity of CDMs which are concentrated in cities and the absence of migrant sensitive products and services, migrants appear to remain by and large financially excluded.
- Children of migrant workers in plantations, children of footloose labourers and older children from poorer families are less likely to get enrolled in schools and more likely to drop out. There is a silent exclusion of migrant children in the schools in the absence of measures to bridge the language barriers of both the children as well as the teachers. However, this is minimal when the child is enrolled at young ages, at pre-primary or in Grade I.
- While migrant workers, who have been to other destinations, rate Kerala as a place which treats them comparatively better, these workers experience stigma, discrimination and exploitations at unacceptable levels in Kerala too. Without realising the contributions

of migrant workers to the economy, the host community remains prejudiced and the markets as well as the employers exploit them, leveraging their helplessness.

- Kerala is one of the very few Indian states where the overall government response to migration has been positive and accommodative. However, Government of Kerala's much appreciable attempts have, by and large, not resulted in the inclusion of workers. In the absence of evidence-informed designs, most of the initiatives have missed out on the requirements of the migrant workers and their families. Despite this, Kerala remains a haven for migrant workers, offering them the best possible wages and sustained job opportunities. Although an average migrant worker in Kerala finds the work environment and living arrangements in the state better than elsewhere, these need substantial improvement to bring down the high vulnerability of the workers to accidents, injuries, morbidity and death.









## Recommendations

Kerala state requires the migrant labourers more than they require the state. Creating this awareness among the key stakeholders in the state is fundamental. For Kerala to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it has to foster migrant inclusive development. The inclusion of migrant workers needs to be construed as a collective responsibility rather than that of the government alone.

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- **Kerala needs to realise that the state requires the migrant labourers more than they require the state. Creating this awareness among the key stakeholders is fundamental to developing inclusive policies:** Labour migration to Kerala is a win-win situation for both the state as well as the migrant workers. While the workers enjoy the best wage rates in the country, they fill an important vacuum and play an indispensable role in the Kerala labour market. In fact, migrants have the choice of other destinations in the country whereas the state's economy is somewhat dependent on the migrant workforce given the demographic scenario. While the government has somewhat realised this, the other stakeholders have not yet done so. Creation of this awareness is fundamental to stimulating a vigorous response towards mainstreaming migrant workers.
- **Kerala achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for migrant inclusive development and the state needs to gear up for it:** The future of human development in Kerala is also dependent on how fast the migrant population catches up with the current level of development in the state. Given the level of saturation of most of the human development indicators, migrants' access or lack of access to products and services is likely to influence the overall achievements. This demands serious deliberations, focussed investments and sustained interventions under the aegis of the Government of Kerala.
- **Bridging the information gap is an important first step in the planning process:** There is only limited information available about labour migration to Kerala. Further investigations on various facets of migration are needed to plug these data gaps. Better understanding of the issues of migrant workers as well as that of the host community can contribute to evidence-informed policies and programming.
- **Kerala is best placed in formulating a policy on inter-state migrant workers and creating a road map towards inclusion:** Kerala has an economy built on sending workers to other parts of the world. Hence the state is best placed to set an example to the world on how migrants should be treated. The proactive initiatives of the Government of Kerala as a responsible receiving state can offer valuable lessons to other Indian states which will also eventually have to follow the development trajectory of Kerala. Formulating a comprehensive policy on labour migration to Kerala can unambiguously create a road map for migrant inclusive development.
- **Kerala's unique demography calls for setting up a Department of Migrant Affairs:** The Kerala diaspora is estimated to be nearly three million. Almost an equal number of migrants from various Indian states are estimated to be working in Kerala. The issues of migrant workers and their families are much beyond the scope of the Department of Labour and Skills. The existing Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) Department may be elevated to a Department of Migrant Affairs which manages the affairs of both the non-resident Keralites as well as the migrant workers in the state.
- **Work with the source states and jointly address the challenges of migrant labourers:** It is important to get the source states involved in addressing the issues of migrant workers. As migration to Kerala benefits the source states significantly, these states also have both interest and responsibility to ensure that the workers are mainstreamed. It will be a significant step if the services of the source states are engaged in supporting the efforts of Kerala to promote the welfare of the migrants.
- **The inclusion of migrant workers needs to be construed as a collective responsibility rather than that of the government alone:** The industries in the state have benefited most from the migrant workers. Beyond taking advantage of the migrant labour force, the employers, the industry guilds as well as the trade unions in the state are yet to take ownership of the welfare of migrant





workers. The government, as a facilitator, needs to catalyse the active involvement of these key stakeholders in mainstreaming migrant workers.

- **The Civil Society Organisations have a pivotal role to play in the inclusion of migrant workers:**

The current level of engagement of CSOs in Kerala in managing the development challenges related to migration is very minimal. Given the profile of the migrant workers in the state, their limited access to public services and entitlements, barriers in communication, constraints of the government systems in responding to their needs and the negative perceptions of the host community, the CSOs in Kerala have a crucial role to play in the dissemination of the social development in Kerala to the migrant communities.

- **A crucial element of inclusion is the sensitisation of host community and addressing their concerns:** Universally, migrants are perceived as a nuisance, blamed for taking away the jobs of the natives, increasing crime rates, public health problems and 'polluting' the culture. Most such complaints are not backed with evidence. Community perceptions may be incorrect but they are important. Such perceptions guide the behaviour of the average Malayali towards the migrant workers. While complaining about the mistreatment of Keralites in other parts of the world, the

state cannot afford to ill-treat migrant workers who belong to marginalised communities. Sensitising the key stakeholders, including political parties, government officials, the media and the residence associations in Kerala is inevitable for facilitating such inclusion.

- **Close the resource gap through leveraging funds as well as technical support:** Migration is a means of social emancipation. However, migration or issues of migrant workers do not find a place among the donor priorities in India. Besides, funding opportunities for interventions in southern states have diminished considerably. Significant advocacy efforts are needed under the leadership of the Government of Kerala to mobilise investments which are inevitable in strengthening the systems and enhancing the capacities of the government, the private sector, academia as well as CSOs in Kerala to foster migrant inclusive development.
- **Migrant inclusive programmes and policies are important although targeted interventions are strategic in the initial phases:** Although targeted interventions addressing the challenges of migrant workers are imperative in the initial phases, the larger goal should be to make the systems and the services migrant sensitive and inclusive rather than exclusive and discriminatory. Ensuring decent work environment and

accommodation, access to quality healthcare, legal and financial inclusion and inclusive education can be the priorities.

- **An audit of products, systems and services for inclusiveness may enhance the sensitivities:** An audit of select systems, products and services that are important to the marginalised populations may be undertaken in order to assess how sensitive and responsive these are to the consumers. For example, the outpatient services of public health institutions may be revised so that services are available from 5.00pm to 9.00pm which will help people (irrespective of migration status) access healthcare without losing their work. On a need basis, branches of select banks at select locations may consider functioning during the evenings or on Sundays which will be very convenient for migrant workers.
- **Cultural inclusion of migrant workers is important:** Migrants enrich the cultural diversity at the destinations as ambassadors of their native states. Leveraging the government programmes and institutions in Kerala, platforms may be created to understand and appreciate the cultural diversity of the migrant workers.





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# District Profiles



# Kasaragod



Benny Peter

**K**asaragod has always been an agrarian economy. Although fishing is a livelihood option along its coastal belt, there are no major fishing harbours in the district. Backward in industrial development, the district has only a few industrial clusters besides a solar energy park in Ambalathara which is in the process of being developed. Handloom products of Kasaragod are quite popular, especially the Kasaragod Saree. And the sector continues to engage native workers. Laterite mining thrives in Hosdurg, Kasaragod and Vellarikkund taluks, and the mining units predominantly engage workers from northeastern India and northern Karnataka. Although not prominent, construction work is also a means of livelihood and depends heavily on migrant workers. The Plantation Corporation does not engage workers from other states in its Periya plantation. The cashew factory in Ambalathara and the tile factory in Neeleswaram too do not engage migrant workers as reported.

Despite the lack of major industries, migrant workers from most of the source states are found in Kasaragod district. One significant difference from the rest of the districts, except Wayanad, is the presence of a large number of workers from Karnataka. The district shares its border with Karnataka and naturally one would expect workers here from the adjacent Dakshina Kannada, Mysuru and Kodagu districts. Although workers from these districts are present,

the majority of the migrant workforce from Karnataka in Kasaragod is from the backward regions of northern Karnataka, especially from districts like Bagalkot, Belagavi, Gadag, Haveri, Koppal, Hassan, Dharwad and Ballari. Workers from Shivamogga and Davangere districts also are present in large numbers. A lot of these migrant workers are with their families that include kids.

Presence of workers from Jashpur district in Chhattisgarh, Guna and Morena in Madhya Pradesh and Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh has been documented in various police stations in the city. Udalguri, Sonitpur and Morigaon districts in Assam, Sawai Madhopur, Chittorgarh, Karauli and Jalore districts in Rajasthan, Giridih and Koderma in Jharkhand, Sangli and Buldhana in Maharashtra, Jamui, Rohtas, Madhubani, Nawada and Bhagalpur in Bihar, Hooghly, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur, West Medinipur, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24 Parganas and Cooch Behar in West Bengal and Moradabad, Gonda, Maharajganj, Azamgarh, Bareilly, Balrampur, Mirzapur and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh are some of the source districts of migrant workers in Kasaragod city. Viluppuram, Thanjavur, Cuddalore, Salem, Pudukkottai, Vellore, Dharmapuri and Madurai are the districts in Tamil Nadu from where people have come to Kasaragod for livelihood.



## Construction

The construction of Kasaragod Central University in Periya was the major work undertaken in this sector in Kasaragod district in the recent past. Here too, migrant workers lived in residential camps typical of the construction sector in India. Workers from Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal lived in rooms made of corrugated sheets. Those from Assam hailed from Bongaigaon, Morigaon and Nagaon districts. Migrants from East Champaran, Aurangabad and Jamui in Bihar were also among the workforce. Migrants from Dharwad district in Karnataka and Bokaro district in Jharkhand were found at the Velluda Solar Park installation site in Ambalathara. Migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal also worked here. Women migrants from Buldhana district in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra and men from Jharkhand were found working at the Sitangoli road construction project.

## Industrial Parks

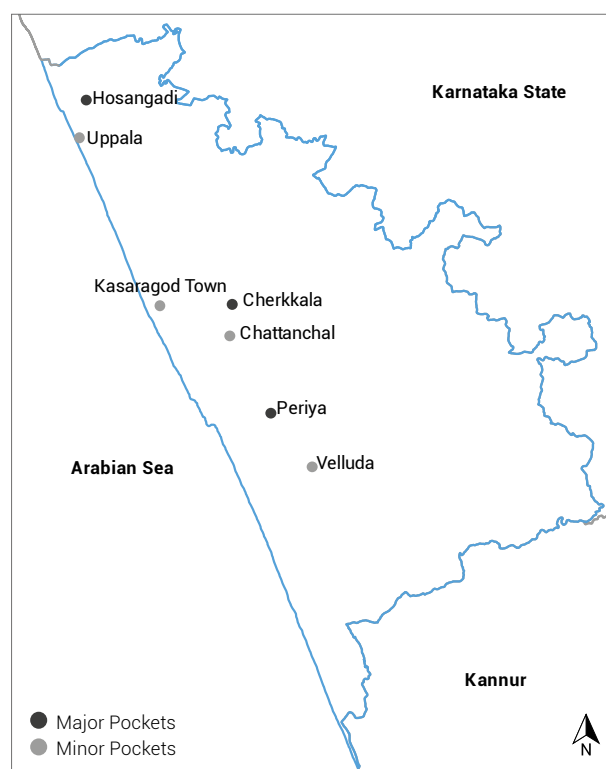
Several factories in the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation Sitangoli industrial estate engage workers from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Migrants from Rajasthan work in the granite/marble units in the industrial park. Vijayanagar industrial estate, adjacent to the Kasaragod Civil Station, has several engineering, plastic and wooden furniture production units which employ migrant workers. Workers from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, who are experts in wood carving, are also found working in a furniture unit in Vijayanagar. Anandapuram industrial estate has plywood factories and units which process plastic. Migrant labourers from Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal work in these units. There are a few plywood factories at Kunjathur in Manjeswar where migrants are employed.

## Labour Nakas

On the National Highway, from Manjeswar to Cherkkala, migrant workers from north Karnataka dominate the *nakas*. Southwards from Kanhangad, workers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal dominate. Kasaragod city has two major *nakas*. The new private bus stand *naka* is dominated by workers from north Karnataka. Men and women from Ballari, Dharwad, Shivamogga and several other districts are found there. There are a lot of families too, seeking work, along with their children, both toddlers as well as of school-going age.

A lot of migrants can also be seen taking buses to various places nearby. A few workers from Murshidabad district in West Bengal were also found at the new bus stand. The Traffic junction *naka* near the District Stationery Office had men and women from Tamil Nadu, particularly from Viluppuram and Thanjavur districts. A lot of them are natives of Kallakurchi in Viluppuram. In Kumbala, the *naka* is near the Badiyadukka bus stand in front of the Communist Party of India Area Committee Office. The labour *naka* in Uppala is in front of the Uppala Post Office. Workers from Shivamogga, Dharwad, Davangere, Bagalkot and Haveri

Figure. 17: Migrant Pockets in Kasaragod District, 2016-17



assemble at Uppala in the evening also. Presence of workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has also been reported. Workers, mainly those from north Karnataka, come back to the *naka* in Hosangadi circle in Manjeswar in the evening.

Workers from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand were also seen at the Kanhangad Traffic Circle *naka*. A representative of Kottenchery Cooperative Society was found collecting deposits from migrant workers at 7.30 am in the morning and issuing receipts. In Peelikode, workers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal assembled in front of the Panchayat office and the Milma booth.

## Residential Pockets

Chattanchal and Cherkkala in the outskirts of the city were found to be the two major residential pockets. Young men from Karnataka lived in rented rooms in Chattanchal. In Cherkkala, scores of migrant workers from Karnataka, from young men to those who were in their middle ages, were found sleeping on the street in the December chill, at the traffic circle where the National Highway meets Badiyadukka road. In the city, Meepugiri houses several migrant workers. Hosangadi, Uppala, Velluda and Periya are the other major residential pockets of migrant workers identified in Kasaragod district.



# Kannur

Balakrishnan Koyyal

Laterite mining, fishing, plywood, dredging and sand mining, construction, handloom and *beedi* are some of the major industries in Kannur. The district also has several industrial estates. Laterite mining, fishing and plywood industries are heavily dependent on migrant workers. *Beedi* and handloom sectors however, do not engage migrant workers. Aralam farm currently does not engage significant number of migrant workers. Granite mining, which is another sector in Kannur, was stagnant during the study due to court interventions. The Bell metal cluster at Kunhimangalam in Payyannur continues to be traditional. Migrant workers are engaged in the industrial estates in Kannur. They work in the hotels and restaurants across the district too.

In addition to Kannur corporation limits, Azhikkal, Poythumkadavu, Valapattanam, Thalassery, Koothuparamba, Thalipparamba, Andoor, Payyannur, Mattannur, Blathur, Ulikkal, Oorathur and Kalyad are some of the points where there is concentration of migrant workers. Industrial units in Andoor, Mangattuparamba, Palayad, Valiyavelicham and Nadukani employ migrant workers. Migrants from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Rajasthan are found working in Kannur district.

## Laterite Mining

Laterite stones from Kannur are transported to other districts in Kerala and also to the neighbouring Karnataka state. Most of the laterite mining is concentrated in Iritty and Thalipparamba taluks. Urathoor, Blathoor, Kalliad, Nuchiyad, Kurumathoor and Ulikkal are some of the mining pockets. The work involves heavy physical labour in a dusty environment. Migrant workers from Assam and Karnataka were found to be the majority engaged in the mining work in Urathoor. Unlike Bengali Muslims from Assam who are available in large numbers across several districts in Kerala, single Hindu and Christian men from Lower Assam were found to be the majority in the laterite mining sector. Rabha, Boro, Barman and Narsari are some of the common surnames. Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Barpeta and Bongaigaon are the districts of their origin. Migrant workers from Karnataka engaged in the laterite mining sector are predominantly from the northern and central Karnataka districts of Dharwad, Belagavi, Davangere, and also from Udupi. Those who operated the excavators are mostly from Tamil Nadu. Men from Assam as well as Karnataka were found working at the same site but ganging up according to the states they hailed from.



## Marine Fishing

Azhikkal and Ayikkara are the harbours in Kannur district. Traditional fishers from five Indian states were found operating in Azhikkal harbour. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal are the native states of traditional fishers who work in Azhikkal. Kanyakumari district and Rameswaram in Ramanathapuram district are the source areas for workers from Tamil Nadu. Fishers from Udupi in Karnataka and Srikakulam and Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh are also found here. Odiya fishers from Balasore, Cuttack, Khordha and Puri, and Bengali Hindu fishers from South 24 Parganas district also work on the fishing boats. Odiya fishers said that due to the presence of turtles (Olive Ridley Turtles) it was 'risky' for them to operate on the Odisha coast. These turtles get trapped in the net and die. The net also gets damaged. Fishers from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha are found in Ayikkara harbour.

## Plywood Industry

Valapattanam has a cluster of plywood and allied industrial units. One of the oldest and largest plywood manufacturing units in India is in Valapattanam. Workers from Odisha, Assam and West Bengal were found working in plywood and allied units in Valapattanam. Workers from Dhemaji, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam, and Jajpur, Bhadrak and Dhenkanal districts in Odisha are found here. Saran, Sivan and Katihar are the districts in Bihar from where workers come to Valapattanam. Jajpur, Angul, Bhadrak, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Ganjam and Kendrapara are the districts of origin of migrant workers from Odisha. Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, Ballia in Uttar Pradesh, South Tripura in Tripura, Udalguri and Dhubri districts in Assam are also source districts. Migrant workers from the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas in West Bengal are documented within the Valapattanam police station limits. Workers from Tamil Nadu and Manipur can also be found. The Government Primary Health Centre in Valapattanam has a Hindi name board. Though the majority are single male migrants, Valapattanam has migrant families also.

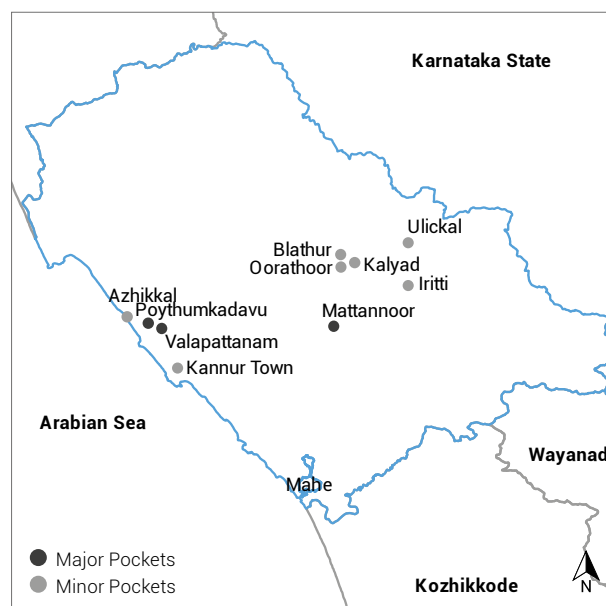
## Dredging and Sand Mining

The dredging work for Azhikkal Port on the Valapattanam side of the Valapattanam River and sand mining engage migrant labour in large numbers. Poythumkadavu which is a core dredging area has migrant workers from Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. Men were found toiling in the water and on the bank of the river under native supervisors. They lived in rented rooms and houses in and around Poythumkadavu. They reportedly start work very early in the morning and earn around Rs 1000 a day or even more. Children of a few migrant workers study in Poythumkadavu Upper Primary School.

## Construction

The construction of Kannur International Airport at Mattannur is a major site where migrant workers are engaged in large numbers. These workers are housed in temporary sheds made of corrugated sheets, typical of the construction sector all over India. Workers from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal have

Figure. 18: Migrant Pockets in Kannur District, 2016-17



been hired for the work. The construction of regulator-cum-bridge at Cherupuzha engaged workers predominantly from West Bengal and Karnataka. Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Odisha are the native states of migrants at the labour *nakas* who work in the construction sector.

## Labour Nakas

South Bazar near Kaltex Circle in Kannur city is one of the major *nakas* in the city. Workers from Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Assam assemble near the Indian Coffee House seeking work. Men from Viluppuram and Salem districts in Tamil Nadu, Purnia and Saran in Bihar, Ballia and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, Chirang in Assam and Cuttack in Odisha can also be found here. Chala bypass junction is another major labour *naka* in the Kannur city premises. In Thalipparamba, migrant workers assemble in front of the taxi stand and near the bus stand in the morning for work. Poovam near Nadukani has a labour *naka*. *Nakas* were found near the overbridge in Thalassery, in front of the private bus stand in Koothuparamba as well as in Payyannur.

## Residential Pockets

Migrant fishers in Azhikkal live on the boats or in rented rooms in nearby areas. Poythumkadavu and Valapattanam are also residential pockets of migrant workers. There are numerous buildings on the Azhikkal -Valapattanam Road housing migrant workers. Those working in the factories in Valapattanam live on the factory premises or nearby. On the Palayad Road in Thalipparamba, several buildings house migrant workers from Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Mattannoor airport construction site also houses migrant workers. Workers in the laterite mining pockets live near the mining area in rented houses. Parimba on the Corom Road in Payyannur has buildings where migrant workers, predominantly from West Bengal, stay.

# Wayanad

Savanan R.S.

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 Malayalis.



## 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.

## Labour *Nakas*

Vijaya Talkies junction in Kalpetta, Sathramkunnu junction in Sulthanbathery 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.

Figure. 19: Migrant Pockets in Wayanad District, 2016-17



# Kozhikode



Benny Peter

**C**onstruction, fishing, timber, tiles, footwear and handloom are the major industries in the district. Construction, fishing and footwear heavily depend on migrant labour. The clay tile industry in Farook and the timber industry in Kallayi continue to be dominated by native workers. Handlooms remain a traditional sector with exclusive native labour. Hotels and restaurants in the city employ migrant workers, particularly from northeastern India and Nepal. Young men, even from Tripura, can be found working in the hotel industry. They travel nearly 4,000km from their native place, taking five days to reach Kozhikode. In addition to Kozhikode corporation, Koyilandy, Vadakara, Kuttiyadi, Nadapuram, Thamarassery, Thiruvambady and Anakkampoyil are some of the locations where concentration of migrant workers can be found. In Koodaranji, Thamarassery, Ponoor, Koodathai and Omassery also workers were visibly prominent. Major source states are Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Over the years, a corridor has evolved between Kozhikode and Bardhaman, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts in West Bengal. Nadia, Darjeeling, Purba Medinipur, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Hooghly are the other districts in West Bengal reported as native districts by workers. Migrant workers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal dominate the construction and fishing sectors, whereas workers from Bihar are the majority in the footwear industry.

## Construction

Kozhikode is one of the four major construction hubs in the state. In addition to the city, there is a slew of construction work-flats as well as commercial buildings-progressing on both sides of the bypass. There are also lot of infrastructure development work going on within the corporation area and its peripheries. Like other districts in Kerala, the construction sector in Kozhikode depends heavily on migrant labour. Workers, predominantly from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh are employed in the construction sector. For minor construction, *naka* labourers are engaged directly or through contractors. One of the oldest labour contract societies which undertakes significant infrastructure development projects in Kozhikode, employs nearly 1,000 migrant workers. These workers are mainly from Assam, West Bengal and Odisha. Even in remote corners of the district, major projects depend on migrant workers. For example, Santali tribal men from Jharkhand work in Anakkampoyil at the Kandappanchal hydroelectric project site.

## Marine Fishing

Traditional fishers from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha were found operating across the fishing harbours in Kozhikode district. Beypore, Puthiyappa and Koyilandy are the important fish landing centres in the district, Beypore being a major port. Fishers from Colachel in Kanyakumari



district of Tamil Nadu have been historically present in the harbour. Some of them even co-own boats that operate from Beypore. The *Srank* (Captain) of the boat would typically be a worker from Tamil Nadu. Traditional Hindu fishers from Kakdwip in the Sundarban region of South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal and fishers from Odisha coast, particularly from Khordha and Puri districts, also work in Beypore, in addition to fishers from Kanyakumari. While in Beypore and Puthiyappa harbours, fishers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal dominate, migrants from Odisha coast were found to be the majority in Koyilandy. Tamil fishers from Cuddalore and Colachel are also present, but they are fewer in number. These fishers either live on the boats or in rented rooms near the harbours. In addition to these migrant fishers, unskilled workers from Assam, particularly from Dhemaji and Sivasagar, can also be found, loading and unloading fish and ice from boats or trucks.

### Footwear

Along the Ramanattukara – Nallalam stretch, there are several industrial units in the footwear value chain which employ migrant men, mostly from eastern Indian states. A footwear major in Kerala, which has several units along this stretch, employs workers predominantly from Bihar. There are also workers from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and other states. These workers are recruited through a referral system without employing intermediaries. A good employee refers potential employees known to him to the unit. These workers are provided typical benefits such as ESI and PF. The referral system ensures better retention and productivity. Purnia, Madhepura, Champaran, Sitamarhi, Samastipur, Araria, Saran, Mirsapur, Madhubani, Kishanganj and Katihar are some of the districts in Bihar from where people come to work in the footwear industry.

### Labour Nakas

Meenchanda bypass junction, Cherambalam, Pottammal, Kovoov and Vellimadukunnu are some of the labour *nakas* in Kozhikode city. Workers from Tamil Nadu can be found concentrated at Cherambalam, whereas other labour joints had workers from multiple states. Meenchanda and Vellimadukunnu *naka* were found dominated by migrant workers from West Bengal. Workers assemble near the New Hotel in front of the old private bus stand in Vadakara and in front of the market in Kuttiyadi.

**Figure. 20: Migrant Pockets in Kozhikode District, 2016-17**

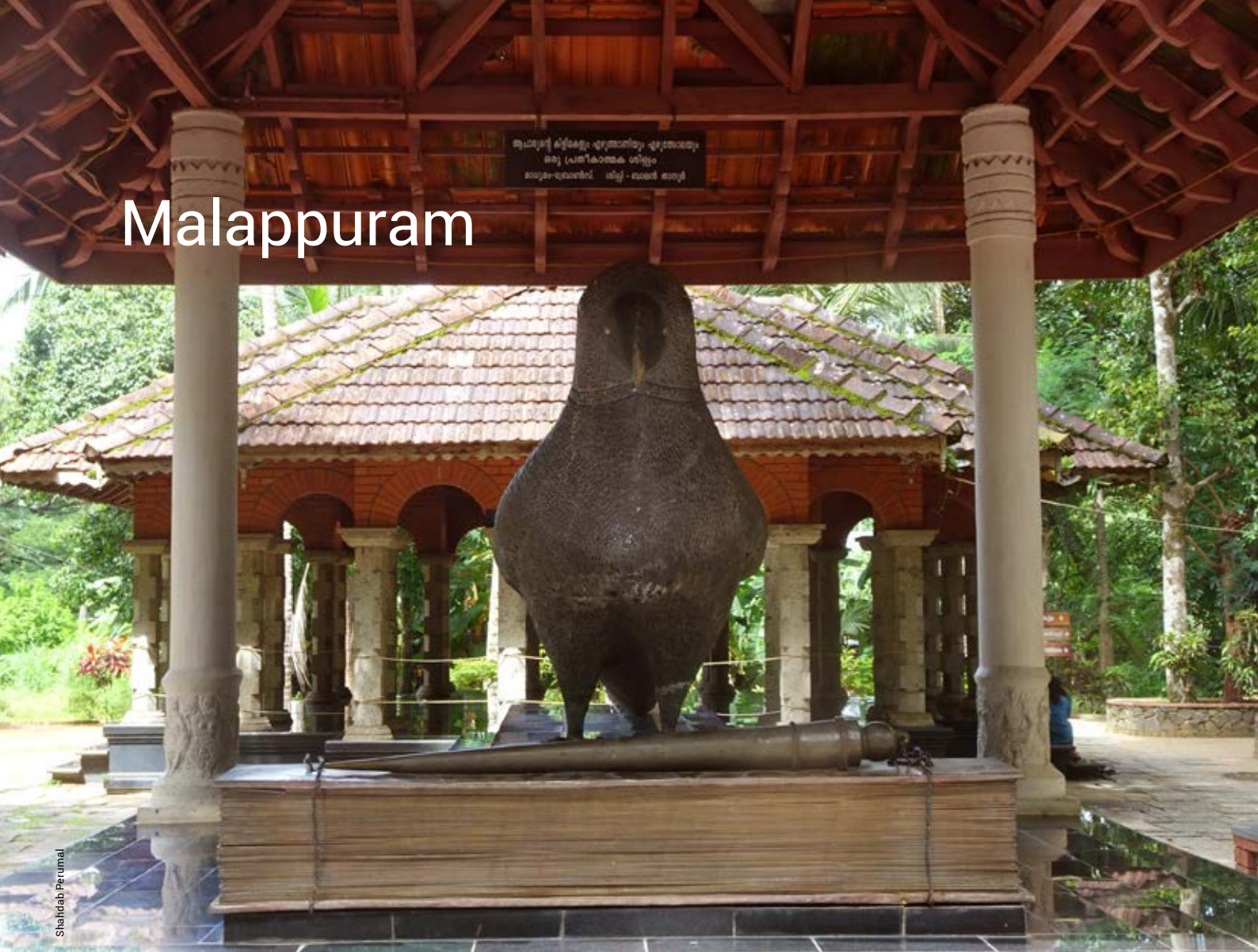


### Residential Pockets

Merikkunnu/Vellimadukunnu is one of the largest residential pockets of migrant workers, predominantly from West Bengal and Assam. Kadavu Road (Poolakkadavu) in Vellimadukunnu has several buildings on its both sides housing a large number of migrant workers. Beypore is another major residential hub of migrant workers, particularly those who work in the fishing sector. Maruthonkara Road in Kuttiyadi also houses a significant number of migrant workers. Workers commute to various places nearby from Kuttiyadi. Koyilandy, Vadakara, Thamarassery, Koodaranji, Thiruvambady and Anakkampoyil are some of the other residential areas. Anakkampoyil church had a Hindi service on Sunday evenings during December 2016.



# Malappuram



Shahidab Perumal

**M**alappuram district does not have any major industrial hub. There are some public sector enterprises in Kuttippuram and Edappal. Industrial units such as footwear, furniture or engineering firms can be found scattered in the district. The Kottackal Arya Vaidya Shala at Kottackal is an important enterprise in the district. Fishing is another industry given the district's long coastline. Laterite mining takes place across the taluks. The quarries in the district were dormant at the time of undertaking this fieldwork due to court intervention. Fishing, laterite mining and construction are the major industries that depend on migrant workers. The furniture industry has workers from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh and footwear industry engages workers mainly from Bihar. Young men from Tripura and West Bengal were also found working in restaurants in Tirur.

Despite the lack of major industries, most of the towns in Malappuram have significant presence of migrant workers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, indicating high incidence of small scale construction. Malappuram, Manjeri, Perinthalmanna, Kottackal, Tirur, Ponnani, Edappal, Valanchery, Kadungattukund, Indianoor, Tanur, Parappanangadi and Chelari were some of the migrant pockets identified. Besides workers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, presence of workers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Assam, Rajasthan and Jharkhand has also been documented. Tiruchirappally, Dharmapuri, Thiruvavur, Madurai, Viluppuram, Virudhunagar and Ariyalur districts are the source areas in Tamil Nadu. Bardhaman, Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, South 24

Parganas, Nadia, Bankura, Cooch Behar and Hooghly are the districts in West Bengal from where workers come to Malappuram in large numbers. Workers from West Bengal in Tirur reported significant presence of migrants from Bangladesh in the district. There are migrants from Gorakhpur, Mau and Unnao districts in Uttar Pradesh, and Golpara, Kamrup, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Chirang and Morigaon districts in Assam working in Malappuram district. Bardhaman – Malappuram has almost evolved as a migration corridor between Kerala and West Bengal. Significant presence of families with children was not identified in the district. However, there are Tamil couples here who have come to work leaving their children with relatives in their native places.

## Marine Fishing

Ponnani is the major fish landing centre in Malappuram district. Migrants from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal worked on the fishing boats. Workers from Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu are mostly engaged as captain, and migrants from West Bengal work as deck hands. A significant proportion of workers from West Bengal in the fishing sector are Hindus. South 24 Parganas, from where traditional fishers from West Bengal come to work in major harbours in Kerala, was reported as the major source district. There were men from Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh who work at the harbour loading and unloading fish and ice. The fishers live on the boats or in rented rooms near the Ponnani harbour.



## Laterite Mining

Laterite mining units are spread across most of the taluks in Malappuram. Indianoor near Kottackal and Melmuri near Malappuram town are the mining areas visited. The workers here are tribal Hindu men from Assam who said they hailed from Golpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar or Kamrup districts. There were also workers from Bardhaman, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar in West Bengal. At the time of the visit, some mines had been closed on account of demonetisation, and workers had been instructed to wait for a week to resume work.

## Labour Nakas

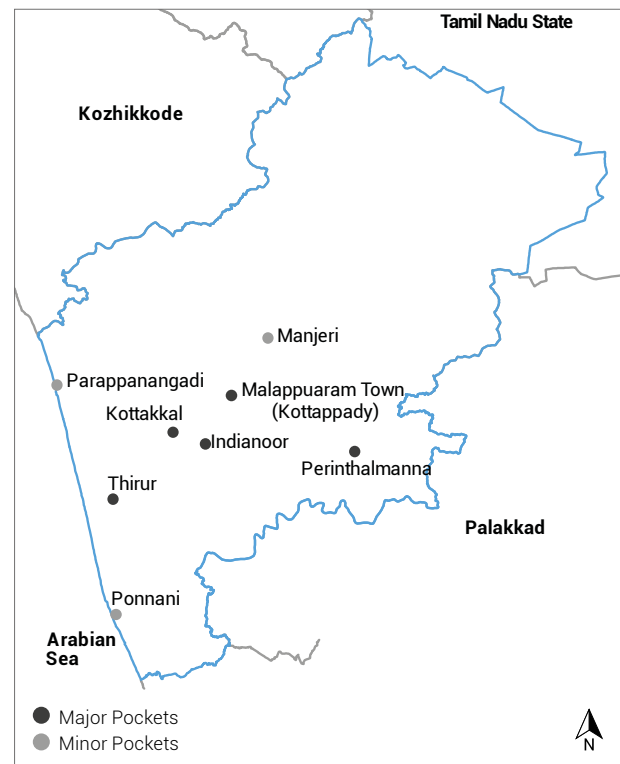
Most of the towns in the district have labour *nakas*. In Tirur there are geographic demarcations of the *naka* and workers are conscious of it. Workers from Tamil Nadu, mostly from Viluppuram and Tiruchirappalli, wait in front of the private bus stand and at the ring road junction. The migrants from West Bengal seek work from the Masjid Bazar area. Bardhaman, Murshidabad and Bankura are the districts in West Bengal reported by the workers in the Masjid Bazar *naka* as their native places. Edappal junction, Kuttippuram and Valanchery private bus stand, Kottackal private bus stand, Perinthalmanna town, Manjeri old private bus stand, Tanur railway station road junction, Thazhe Chelari, Padikkal and Vettichira are some of the labour *nakas* in the district.

## Residential Pockets

Most of the towns in Malappuram district have typical rented facilities for migrant workers that one can easily recognise. At Nambisan Pady (Kottappady) in Malappuram near Mannur Shiva temple, there are several structures built for and rented out to migrant workers. Migrant workers from different states can be found residing in the same building though in different rooms. For instance, workers from Viluppuram, Thanjavur, Dharmapuri and Madurai districts in Tamil Nadu, who did construction work, and workers from Bardhaman and Murshidabad districts in West Bengal were found living in adjacent rooms. There were also workers from Assam.

At Melmuri, there were Tamil families from Namakkal who were engaged in granite stone work. There were also single men from Assam and West Bengal who worked in the laterite mining sector. Indianoor was another hub of migrant workers in the laterite mining sector, particularly men from Assam. At Manjeri also workers from Tamil Nadu

Figure. 21: Migrant Pockets in Malappuram District, 2016-17



and other states were found living in the same multi-storied building. Workers from Mau district in Uttar Pradesh, Ariyalur, Virudhunagar and Madurai districts in Tamil Nadu, and Bardhaman, 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Nadia districts in West Bengal were also found living in Manjeri.

Kottackal is another hub of migrants. There are rooms rented out to migrants in Swagathamad area where workers, mostly from Murshidabad and 24 Parganas in West Bengal, live. At Parappanangadi, there are several buildings on Tanur Road that house workers from West Bengal, Assam and Odisha.

Perinthalmanna has a colony of Tamil workers where migrants from Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri and Thanjavur can be found. Tirur, Ponnani, Edappal, Valanchery, Kadungattukund, and Chelari were some of the other residential pockets identified.





Anastes M.P.

# Palakkad

Popular as the granary of Kerala, agriculture is the chief occupation of people in Palakkad. While agriculture is universal in the district, there are many large farms and plantations in Mannarkkad and Chittur taluks. There are several industries including major public sector units such as Malabar Cements and Indian Telephone Industries in the Industrial Development Area in the Kanjikode-Valayar belt of Palakkad taluk. Iron and steel production dominates the industrial sector in Kanjikode. Construction and mining, although not major, are also prevalent. Construction activities take place in the urban areas and peripheries. Mining is clustered around Muthalamada and Thrithala. There are brick kilns and farms in Kozhinjampara.

Palakkad was one of the initial destinations of migrant workers in Kerala from beyond south India. Workers from Odisha and Bihar came here to work in the iron and steel industry. Now migrant workers are found in almost all the sectors in the district, including agriculture. Workers from Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan can be found in the district. Presence of workers from Nepal and Bangladesh has also been documented.

Kanjikode, Valayar, Mannarkkad, Attappady, Kozhinjampara, Kollengode, Nenmara, Nelliampathy, Shornur, Pattambi and Thrithala are some of the places where there are concentrations of migrant workers. Workers with families are there in Kanjikode, Attappady, Nelliampathy and

Mannarkkad. There were over 150 children of migrant workers enrolled in the Govt. Lower Primary School, Kanjikode and G.H.S. Kanjikode during the academic year 2016-17.

Giridih and Palamu in Jharkhand; Dindori in Madhya Pradesh; Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh; Nagaon in Assam; Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas, Cooch Behar and Paschim Medinipur in West Bengal; Muzaffarpur, Purnia, Sitamarhi and Darbhanga in Bihar and Thanjavur, Thiruvavur, Nagapattinam, Coimbatore, Theni, Cuddalore and Viluppuram in Tamil Nadu are some of the source districts of migrant workers in Palakkad district.

## Plantations

Tea, coffee and rubber plantations in Nelliampathy hills, Attappady hills and Mannarkkad engage migrant labour. A lot of those who work in the plantations are here with their families. Other farms and estates too survive on migrant labour. Workers from Dindori, a district in Madhya Pradesh dominated by tribal population, can be found in Mannarkkad plantations. Workers from 24 Parganas, Medinipur, and Murshidabad districts in West Bengal, and Nagaon in Assam have also been documented. There are also workers from Jharkhand here. Migrants from West Bengal and Bihar are there in Attappady hills also. Natives of Murshidabad in West Bengal work in Nelliampathy hills. Toddy tappers from Avinashi, Udumalpet and Pollachi (Coimbatore and Erode districts in Tamil Nadu) work in the coconut groves



at Kozhinjampara. Agriculture nurseries along the Mundoor-Mannarkkad stretch engage workers from West Bengal, Assam and Odisha. The mango groves in Muthalamada engage workers from Bihar. Migrants from West Bengal are employed in agriculture-related activities in Kunissery, Kuzhalmannam and Nenmara.

## Iron and Steel

Iron and steel related industrial units in Palakkad district are concentrated in the Industrial Development Area (IDA) and New Industrial Development Area (NIDA) in Kanjikode. These units produce iron/steel rods, bars, pipes, ingots and other allied products, mainly from scrap iron. The industry depends on migrant labour, significantly from Bihar and Odisha. Iron and steel was one of the first few sectors in Kerala that engaged male workers from eastern India significantly. Workers from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have also made their presence felt in this sector. Like in most of the industrial settings, workers live on the factory premises. Workers with families live outside. Buxar, Nalanda, Vaishali, East Champaran in Bihar, and Ganjam, Mayurbhanj and Kendujhar in Odisha are some of the districts from where migrants come to work in the iron and steel industry here.

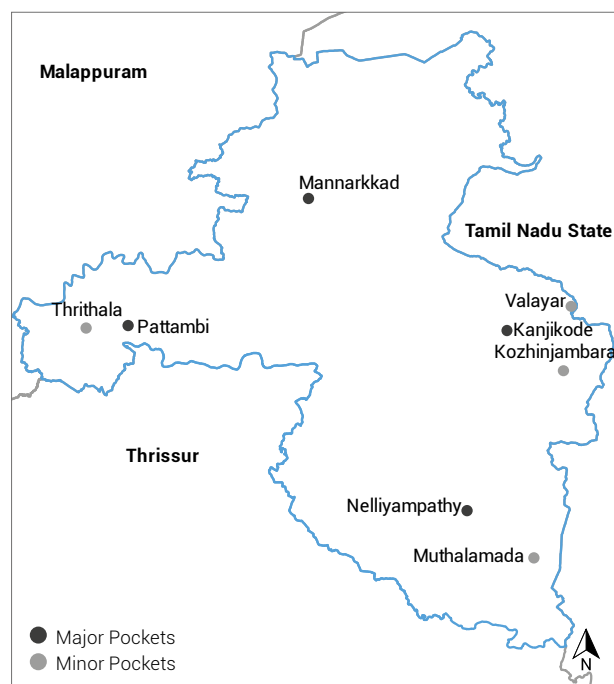
## Labour *Nakas*

One of the largest labour *nakas* in the district is at Pattambi private bus stand. Pattambi is well connected to several cities in the district and migrants leverage this. In addition to Palakkad town, Shornur, Thrithala and Mannarkkad have labour *nakas*. Migrants from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal dominate the *nakas*. Workers from Assam and Uttar Pradesh can also be found.

## Residential Pockets

Kanjikode, Valayar, Pattambi, Nelliampathy and Mannarkkad are the major residential pockets identified in the district. Most migrant workers in Kanjikode and Valayar live within or near the factory premises. In Nelliampathy, workers live in the plantations as well as in rented rooms in and around the town. The stretch between private bus stand and Nila Hospital on Pallam Road in Pattambi has umpteen structures that have been rented out to migrant workers. The strategic connectivity

**Figure. 22: Migrant Pockets in Palakkad District, 2016-17**



to the *naka* and other cities in the district, easy access to the railway station and availability of water in abundance (River Bharathapuzha) were the major reasons cited by migrants for choosing Pattambi as their place of residence. Workers from West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu were found residing at this pocket. Most of them used diesel as fuel for cooking. While majority were single men, the workforce from Tamil Nadu comprised women as well. Padinjare Angadi in Thrithala also had workers from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal living in rented rooms. A group of around 35 workers who service the septic tanks in and around Ottappalam were found spending the night on the street at Mayannoor. These seasonal labourers from Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu said they had recently been evicted from their shacks beneath the Mayannoor Bridge near the railway tracks. Kozhinjampara, Kollengode, Muthalamada, Nenmara and Shornur are some of the other residential pockets.





# Thrissur



Construction, clay tile manufacturing, jewellery making, fishing and plantations constitute the major sectors that contribute to the economy of Thrissur. The district depends heavily on migrant labourers for its growth and development. Malakkappara, Chalakkudy, Kodakara, Chevoor, Pudukkad, Ollur, Puzhakkal, Adat, Tirur, Wadakkanchery, Kunnamkulam, Guruvayur, Chavakkad, Azhikode and Kuttanellur were the major migrant hot spots identified in the district. Migrant labourers from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat work in Thrissur. There are numerous small scale industries also in the district. Athani, Ollur and Chalakkudy have some of the major industrial clusters. There are also small scale polymers, scraps and distillery units spread across the district and they depend on migrant labourers. The hotels and restaurants in the district too depend heavily on migrant labourers. Chavakkad, suburbs of Thrissur city like Puzhakkal and Adat, Mammiyoor near Guruvayur and Malakkappara are some of the major residential pockets of migrant workers in the district.

## Construction

Along with Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur is a major construction hub in the state. Thrissur city and its peripheries are the major areas where construction activities are bustling. Puzhakkal and Adat

are two such places. The major sources for workers in the construction sector include Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam and Uttar Pradesh. Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri and Nadia districts in West Bengal; Dindigul, Theni, Thoothukkudi, Thanjavur, Salem and Madurai in Tamil Nadu and Nagaon, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur in Assam are some of the districts from where a majority of these workers come.

## Jewellery Making

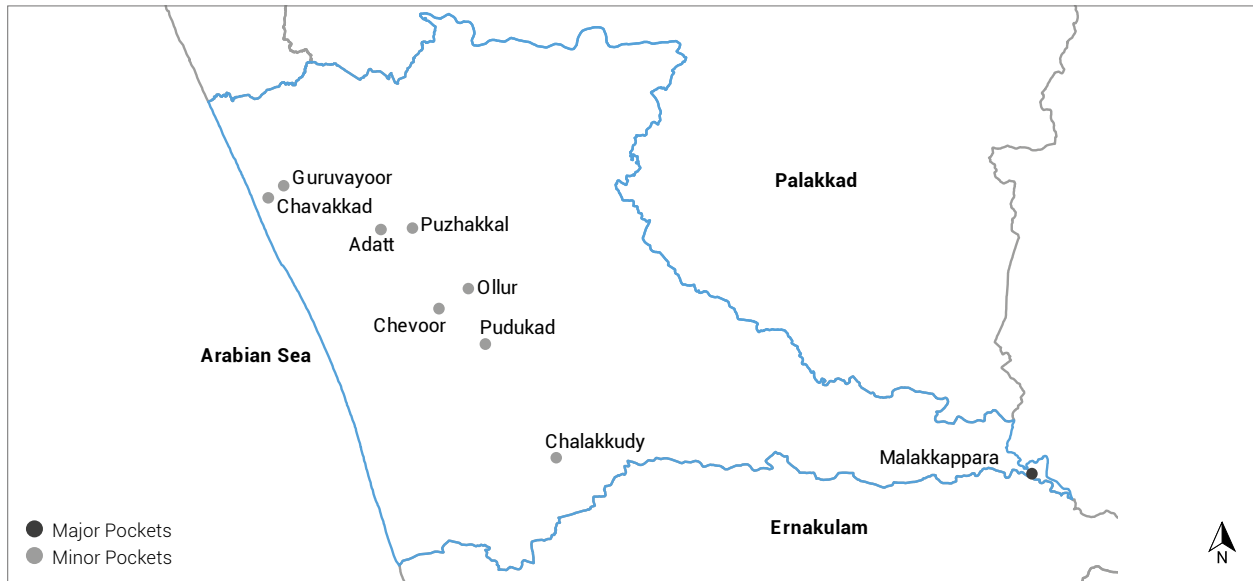
Thrissur is one of the centres of gold business in India, and jewellery making is a major industry in the district. The sector engages migrant workers heavily. Perinchery, Venginissery, Cheruvathery and Vallachira are some of the major centres of gold jewellery making. Most of the workers in the sector are traditional artisans from West Bengal, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Hooghly, Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur are the major source districts in West Bengal.

## Clay Tile

Clay roofing tile manufacturing is another major economic sector in Thrissur. The tile industry in the district is more than 100 years old. Locals used to be the main labour force in the tile industry till recently. However, at present the industry depends on migrant labourers. Nenmanikkara, Ollur, Amballur, Pudukkad and Chalakkudy are some of the areas where tile factories are located. Most of the factories



**Figure. 23: Migrant Pockets in Thrissur District, 2016-17**



now remain closed or production has been cut short due to the shortage of clay and the restriction on clay mining. The labourers working in the tile industries are from West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand.

### Plantations

Malakkappara, Palappally and Vaniyambara have some of the major plantations in the district. While Tamil labourers took care of the plantation labour earlier, now workers from eastern Indian states occupy a central place in these plantations. There are now estates in Malakkappara with more than 200 workers from Jharkhand, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Odisha in addition to Tamil and Malayali labourers. Gumla and Lohardaga are the major source districts of migrant workers from Jharkhand and most of them belong to the Oraon tribe.

### Marine Fishing

Marine fishing is a major component of Thrissur's economy. Like in other districts, fishing in Thrissur engages migrant workers. Chavakkad, Azhikode and Chettuva are the fishing hot spots in the district. In addition to fishers from Kanyakumari

district in Tamil Nadu, there are migrants from West Bengal, Assam and Uttar Pradesh working in the fish landing centres.

### Labour Nakas

The major *naka* in the district is adjacent to the District Hospital at Thrissur Swaraj Round. Workers from Tamil Nadu are in a majority here. There are also Tamil women. Kuttanellur bypass junction, Kodakara, Chalakkudy, Athani, Ollur, Wadakkanchery, Kunnamkulam, Chavakkad and Guruvayur also have labour *nakas*.

### Residential pockets

Chavakkad is a major residential pocket of migrant workers in the district. Thiruvathra and Puthiyara under Chavakkad municipal limits are the major hot spots identified. Puzhakkal, Adat, Chalakkudy, Ollur, Pudukkad, Chevoor and Malakkappara also have significant presence of migrant labourers. A labour supply group in Guruvayur has accommodated nearly 300 workers at Mammiyoor. In most of the other towns, workers live in scattered rented facilities. Plantations have facilities to accommodate migrant families within the estate.



# Ernakulam



Benny Peter

Ernakulam is the commercial capital of Kerala and has been one of the most important destinations for migrant workers from all over India. Petroleum refining, construction, plywood, fishing, furniture, textiles and wearing apparel, mining and quarrying, food processing, cement manufacturing, building and maintenance of ships and boats, information technology, healthcare, hospitality, transportation<sup>15</sup>, storage, wholesale and retail and communication are some of the key industrial sectors in the district. Almost all industries in the district engage migrant workers directly or indirectly. Hospitality industry in Kochi, furniture sector in Nellikuzhi, textile/apparel units in Kizhakkambalam, cement factories on Willingdon Island, fishing in Thoppumpady, Munambam and Vypin, rice mills in Kalady, plywood sector in Perumbavoor as well as industrial units in Airapuram, Angamaly, South Vazhakkulam, Edathala, Edayar, Binanipuram, Nellad and Kalamassery are some of the major clusters in the district that engage migrant workers heavily. Construction and hospitality sectors found all over the district also engage migrant workers.

Migrant workers can be found in every nook and corner of the district. Workers from Tamil Nadu have been historically present in the construction and fishing sectors. They continue to be one of the major groups engaged in footloose labour in the district. Now workers from most of

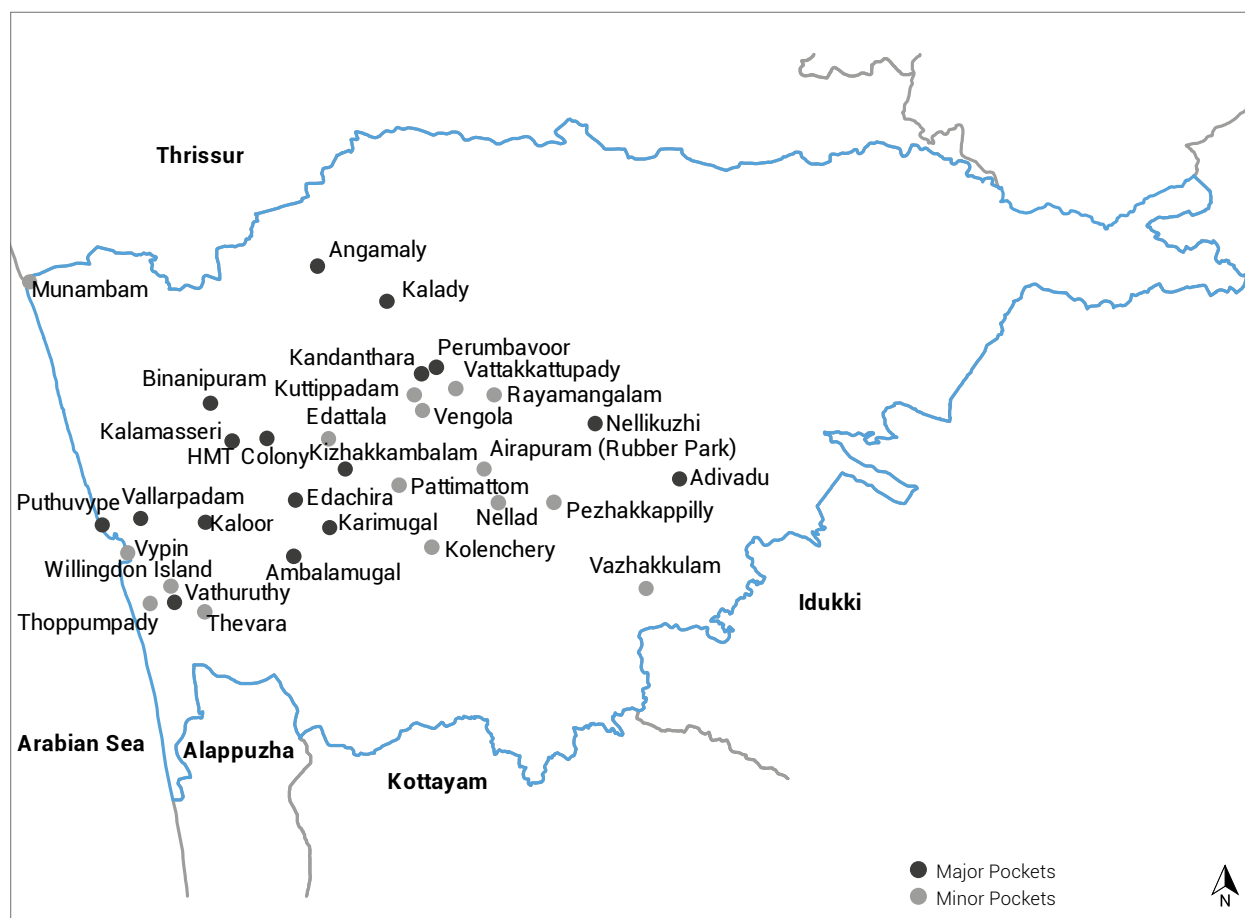
the states known for outward labour migration can be found in Ernakulam. Young men and women from several states work in shops, petrol pumps, restaurants, malls and even hospitals. They include workers from West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. Migrant men and women from Kota district of Rajasthan sell utilities on the road at the busy traffic junctions in Kochi city. Several migrants from Odisha and West Bengal work as gardeners in Kochi city. Young men from Baramulla district in Jammu and Kashmir were also found working in a Kochi restaurant. Granite quarries and crusher units spread out in the district depend on migrant workers. Nagaon-Ernakulam and Murshidabad-Ernakulam are two of the longest migration corridors that have emerged in India in the past two decades. Labourers from Bangladesh and Nepal also work in the district. Kochi, Perumbavoor, Binanipuram, Kalamassery, Nellikuzhi and Kaloore are the residential pockets of migrant workers with families. Men and women were found living on the street too at Kaloore in Kochi. Sunday markets for migrant workers function in Perumbavoor and Ambalamugal where one can even get products from the native places of these workers. One of the churches in Perumbavoor has an Odiya service on Sundays.

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15. Transportation via road, rail, water and air



**Figure. 24: Migrant Pockets in Ernakulam District, 2016-17**



There are several schools in the district with significant number of children of migrant workers during the academic year 2016-2017. All the students in the Government Lower Primary School, Pallilankara, near Kalamassery, are children of inter-state migrant workers. More than 100 migrant students, predominantly from West Bengal and Assam, were found enrolled at Government Upper Primary School Kandanthara. Government High School, Binanipuram has more than 60 students, particularly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. A nursery school for children of migrant workers has been functioning on the premises of the Keenpuram industrial estate at South Vazhakkulam for several years now. Half of the kids enrolled at the Thandirikkal colony Anganwadi in Binanipuram are children of migrant workers.

### Construction

Ernakulam is one of the major construction hubs in the state. Most of the large scale constructions are concentrated within or near the Kochi urban agglomeration. Kochi Metro Rail, Expansion of Kochi Refinery, LNG Terminal at Puthuvype and Infopark Kochi are some of the major constructions commissioned by the government. Construction of an international convention centre at Bolgatty Island, several apartments, and other buildings are also progressing in Kochi. All these major as well as minor constructions depend heavily on migrant workers. Migrant workers from Tamil Nadu have been present in

the construction sector in Kochi for decades and continue to be one of the major groups at the minor construction sites in the city. There are contractors from Tamil Nadu who undertake concreting work on contract from local builders. Men and women from Tamil Nadu work in the construction sector. Dindigul, Theni, Tiruchirappalli, Salem, Madurai, Dharmapuri and Ariyalur are some of the reported source districts in Tamil Nadu. Natives of Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri, Nadia and Malda districts in West Bengal, Patna and Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Morigaon and Nagaon districts of Assam, as well as Rayagada district in Odisha can be found working in the minor construction sector. Major constructions engage workers, predominantly from northern and eastern India. Expansion of Kochi Refinery gave employment to more than 10,000 workers during 2016-17. Workers from Ballia and Gorakhpur districts in Uttar Pradesh, and Buxar, Muzaffarpur and Purnia districts in Bihar can be found at the site. There are also workers from Assam and West Bengal.

Large scale infrastructure companies engaged in the construction of Kochi Metro Rail and Infopark Kochi have been employing workers from Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal and several other states, recruiting them from source areas through a network of intermediaries. Workers on the minor construction sites are either recruited from the local labour *nakas* or have been working with the local contractors as informal employees.



Benny Peter

## Marine Fishing

Ernakulam is a major hub of fishing activity in Kerala and the marine fishing sector depends heavily on migrant workers. Munambam, Vypin and Cochin harbour are the major fish landing centres in the district. Migrant workers are primarily engaged in the trawler boats that spend several days on a single fishing trip. Traditional fishers from Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu are the largest group among migrant workers in the sector. In addition to fishers from Tamil Nadu, there are also traditional fishers from Odisha, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh working here. Migrants from Assam can also be found working on the boats despite having no prior experience. Cuttack, Puri, Jajpur and Nayagarh are the source districts of migrant workers from Odisha. Workers from South 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Malda in West Bengal and Nagaon in Assam can also be found. Most of the workers said they lived on the boats.

Men from Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh were found working in the Cochin harbour loading and unloading fish and ice. Migrant fisher families from Hunsur in Mysuru district were found engaged in inland fishing in their coracles in Chittoor, Vaduthala and Thoppumpady areas in Ernakulam district. These families live in shacks near the water bodies.

## Plywood

Plywood industry is concentrated in Kunnathunadu taluk with Perumbavoor as its nerve centre. There are hundreds of units that produce veneer, plywood and block boards, located mainly in Vengola, Rayamangalam, Vazhakkulam and Asamannoor panchayats and in the Perumbavoor municipality. Except quality control, most of the skilled and unskilled work is carried out by migrant workers. Workers, mainly from Odisha, West Bengal and Assam are engaged in the plywood industry as informal employees. Skilled work such as setting and pressing the veneer layers at high temperature and pressure is generally done by workers from Assam. Work is also outsourced to a migrant contractor on piece rate by the factory owner. The contractor engages workers through his social network. Most workers are young single men. However, migrant women are also employed in some factories for unskilled work such as clipping veneer layers. The single men are provided free accommodation on the factory premises. The estimated number of workers in this sector is about 72,000. Kandhamal, Dhenkanal, Kendrapara and Kalahandi in Odisha; Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur in Assam, and Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar in West Bengal are some of the districts of origin of the migrant workers in the sector.

## Textile and Wearing Apparel

The textile and apparel sector units in Ernakulam district are clustered in Kizhakkambalam. There are also units in other parts of the district including the Kalamassery industrial park. The sector employs migrant workers, predominantly women and girls, from Odisha, Jharkhand and northeastern states. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya are the states from where these workers hail. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are some of the other source states. Workers from other states are generally sourced through an initiative of the National Skill Development Corporation, as reported.

Balangir, Malkangiri, Sundargarh, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Nabarangpur and Rayagada are some of the districts from where Odiya workers come to work in the sector. Lohardaga, Godda, Ranchi, Sahibganj, Gumla, Khunti, Simdega, Pakur and West Singhbhum are some of the source districts in Jharkhand. Sivasagar, Karbi Anglong, Udalguri, Tinsukia, Karimganj, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Baksa, Barpeta, Golaghat and Kamrup are some of the districts in Assam from where workers come.

## Furniture

In Nellikuzhi, near Kothamangalam, there is a cluster of wooden furniture and related industries. There are numerous furniture outlets at Nellikuzhi on the Aluva-Munnar Road. Craftsmen from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, globally renowned for wood carving, work in the furniture industry. There are also a few workers from Uttarakhand state which shares its border with Saharanpur. A sizeable proportion of these highly skilled workers are Muslims and they have been working in Nellikuzhi for several years. Many of them live in Nellikuzhi along with their families. About 25 children from such migrant families were found studying in Government High School Nellikuzhi during the academic year 2016-2017.

## Hospitality and Healthcare

Hotels ranging from international brands with five-star facility to street food shops engage migrant workers. Both migrant men and women work in the sector with majority being men. Workers from northeastern Indian states and Nepal are generally engaged in the lobby, restaurants and housekeeping sections of the luxury hotels. Workers from Darjeeling district in West Bengal can also be found. Workers from other states are generally engaged in other low-skilled work where there is limited customer interaction, for example cleaning the plates. One of the popular vegetarian joints in Kochi has staff members from Manipur who have been working there for several years.





Several hospitals in the district also engage migrant workers as housekeeping staff and attendants. Men and women from Tripura and several northeastern states, and men from Odisha can be found working in multi-speciality hospitals in the district.

### Labour Nakas

Ernakulam district has some of the oldest labour *nakas* in the state. Men and women from Tamil Nadu have been present seeking work at Kaloor and Kadavanthra junctions in Kochi city for more than two decades. Thevara and Vazhakkala are two other labour *nakas* in Kochi. Tamil workers are available seeking work at Vathuruthy also. In addition to workers from Tamil Nadu, workers from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh as well as Muzaffarpur and Patna in Bihar can be found seeking work at the major *nakas* in the city.

Now most towns in the district have a labour *naka*. In Angamaly workers assemble at the junction where M.C. Road meets the National Highway. The *naka* at Kalady is in front of the open stage where M.C. Road meets the Malayattoor - Aluva Road. The Perumbavoor labour *naka* is in front of the Excise Range Office near the Gandhi Circle. Muvattupuzha, Koothattukulam, Kothamangalam and Pukkattupady are some of the other towns with labour *nakas*. Men and women from Tamil Nadu are almost universally available at the *nakas*. Bengali speaking men constitute the other dominant group at the *nakas*. The composition of other workers changes from place to place.

### Residential Pockets

Ernakulam district has some of the largest residential pockets of migrant workers in the state. Vathuruthy on Willingdon Island is the oldest and the largest residential cluster of workers from Tamil Nadu in the district. Now workers from other states also live in Vathuruthy. Tamil migrants in Kochi are concentrated in Vazhakkala, Kaloor, Kalamassery and Pathalam, in addition to Vathuruthy. The Ambalamugal-Karimugal stretch near Kochi Refinery is another large residential area of migrant workers, particularly skilled and unskilled workers from states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. There are also workers from Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam and other states. Several pukka as well as kutcha structures house migrant workers along the labyrinth of lanes near the Kochi Refinery including Kuzhikkad-Puthenkurizu Road. Multi-storied buildings in front of the Fact Kochi Division gate and at Karimugal junction also house workers engaged in the mega expansion of the Refinery. Luka Colony at Edachira is one of the largest

temporary housing facilities for workers from north India engaged in the construction of buildings in the Infopark area. The Kochi Metro Rail workers are housed at H.M.T. Colony and near the L.N.G. Terminal in Puthuvype. Binanipuram is another residential pocket of migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Another major residential pocket of migrant workers is Kandanthara near Perumbavoor. Although the popular perception is that migrants are concentrated in Perumbavoor municipal corporation limits, a recent enumeration found only about 1,700 migrant workers residing within the limits of the municipal corporation, which includes 69 families.<sup>16</sup> An estimated 1,50,000 workers live in the panchayats surrounding Perumbavoor municipal corporation including Vazhakkulam, Vengola, Rayamangalam, Okkal, Kanjoor, Asamannoor and Mudakkuzha. Most of them are from Murshidabad in West Bengal, Nagaon in Assam and from several districts of Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Bihar. While workers engaged by the industries live on the factory premises, those who are engaged in construction live in rented facilities. Kandanthara, Vattakkattupady and Kuttippadam are such areas where the workers from West Bengal and Assam, including families are clustered.

Adivadu near Kothamangalam is another residential pocket of Bengali speaking workers, mostly single men from West Bengal and Assam. Nellikuzhi is a residential hub of workers in the furniture sector from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Mekkalady in Kalady, TB Road near the Angamaly mosque, Pezhakkappilly in Muvattupuzha, Rubber Park at Airapuram, Pattimattom, Manjappetty and Mudickal are some of the other residential areas of workers from West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Kizhakkambalam is a residential pocket of female migrant workers from eastern Indian states who work in the textiles and apparel sector.

Workers from Anantapur at the Kadavanthra *naka* in Kochi reported Udaya colony as their place of stay. Thevara in Kochi city is also an area where migrants from most of the states can be seen. Gardeners from Odisha and West Bengal live with their families near Champakkara Canal in Maradu. Several workers from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh were found sleeping on the pavements at Kaloor junction on the Kaloor-Kadavanthra Road as well as inside the Kaloor bus stand.

16. Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority. (2017). *Survey Report on Migrant Labourers at Perumbavoor Municipality*. Thiruvananthapuram, India: Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority.





# Idukki

Benny Peter

Idukki is famous for its plantations, tourist destinations and hydroelectric projects. The district comprises Devikulam, Udumbanchola, Peerumedu and Thodupuzha taluks. Peerumedu and Devikulam taluks are known for the tea plantations while Udumbanchola is popular for cardamom. Munnar and Thekkady are the tourist hot spots in the district. Industrially backward, agriculture is the chief occupation of the people in this district. Plantations and hospitality sectors now depend on labourers from north, central, east and northeast India. Being a district bordering Tamil Nadu state, migration of Tamil labourers has been going on for decades. The reluctance of younger Tamilians to do low-valued jobs in the recent past has paved the way for migrants from other states entering the Idukki labour market. Though the number of youngsters crossing the border for work has come down, Tamil Nadu continues to be a major source state for migrant labourers in Idukki. In addition to Tamil Nadu, migrants from Assam, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh have been found working in Idukki. People from Nepal also work in the hotel industry here.

Though the intensity of construction-related activities is lesser here compared to other districts, this sector too depends heavily on migrant labour. Major construction activities are taking place in and around Thodupuzha town. Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Assam are the major source states for construction workers in Idukki. The construction

of Punalur-Muvattupuzha Highway employs labourers from West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

There are also a few cement bricks and paving block units in Thodupuzha, Kattappana and Karimkunnam which run entirely on migrant labour. There are a few spices processing units in the high ranges, a mattress manufacturing unit and a footwear manufacturing unit in Thodupuzha. All these industries depend heavily on migrant labour.

## Plantations

Idukki is the cradle of plantation crops in Kerala. Tea, cardamom, rubber and coffee are the major crops. Though the migrants from northern and eastern Indian states are not skilled enough to work in these plantations, the shortage of labour has been forcing plantation managements to hire them. These plantations also hire people from Tamil Nadu. A significant proportion of Tamil workers commute daily to the plantations in jeeps from their home districts adjacent to Idukki. Unlike many sectors where single male migrants dominate the workforce, the plantation sector has predominantly migrant families. Plantation managements tend to hire families as they are less likely to move on compared to single male labourers. Most of the labourers stay inside the plantations making it difficult to reach out to them for interventions. Because of the large number of migrant families here, there are a significant number



of migrant children in the district. The E.K.M. L.P. School at Pasuppara had more than 140 students from Assam, Jharkhand and Bihar enrolled during the academic year 2016-17.

The Peerumedu taluk had mostly migrants from Assam, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. Most of the labourers in Udumbanchola taluk are from Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar. Mandla and Dindori districts in Madhya Pradesh are a major source area of labourers working in Udumbanchola. Tea plantations in Devikulam taluk have migrant workers mostly from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam. People of the Oraon tribe in Jharkhand constitute a major share of workforce in the tea plantations of Munnar.

### Hospitality

Tourism is a major contributor to Idukki's economy. Munnar and Kumily towns have the largest concentration of hotels and resorts. Vagamon, Suryanelli, Idukki and Kanthalloor also have numerous resorts. Most of the hotels and resorts in Idukki engaged migrant workers. Majority of the workers were from states like Assam, West Bengal, Odisha and Mizoram. Nepal is also a source for workers in the hospitality sector. Even small restaurants in the interiors of the district have migrants as labourers.

### Labour Nakas

Thodupuzha private bus stand premises, Thodupuzha bypass junction, Karimkunnam junction, Kattapana, Adimaly, Nedumkandam and Kanjikuzhi have *nakas*. Mainly people from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam and Odisha seek work at these *nakas*.

### Residential Pockets

Plantation workers mostly utilise accommodation provided by the management within the premises. Thodupuzha, Karimkunnam, Kattapana, Adimaly, Nedumkandam, Peerumedu, Kuttikkanam, Munnar, Kumily, Vagamon and Kanjikuzhi are the major towns where migrants can be seen in plenty. But most of them live in scattered locations in rented rooms.

**Figure. 25: Migrant Pockets in Idukki District, 2016-17**





# Kottayam

Savanan R.S.

Construction, hospitality, agriculture, rubber-based products and quarrying are some of the major economic sectors in Kottayam district. The numerous small industrial units in the district also engage migrant workers. Though it is the natives who mostly work in rubber plantations and processing units, these days even migrants are being trained in rubber tapping and latex processing. Migrants from Arunachal Pradesh are now working in a Rubber Producers' Society in Pala. Pavement block and cement bricks units are spread all over the district and migrants from Tamil Nadu, Assam, West Bengal and Jharkhand work in such units.

There are also a few quarries and granite crusher units in and around Kaduthuruthy, Ponkunnam, Kanjirappally, Pinnakkanad and Pala. People from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal work in these units. Fertilizer mixing units in Ettumanoor, Kaduthuruthy and Kottayam depend on migrant labourers.

Textile shops in Kottayam also employ migrants. A textile showroom in Kottayam has more than 300 employees from Tamil Nadu. There are also young men from Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Nepal working as barbers in several saloons and beauty parlours in Kottayam. Over the years Jalpaiguri-Kottayam and Dibrugarh-Kottayam have emerged as corridors of labour movement. Changanassery, Payippad, Chingavanam, Kurichi, Ettumanoor, Pala, Kaduthuruthy, Ponkunnam and Erattupetta are the major pockets with considerable concentration of migrants.

## Construction

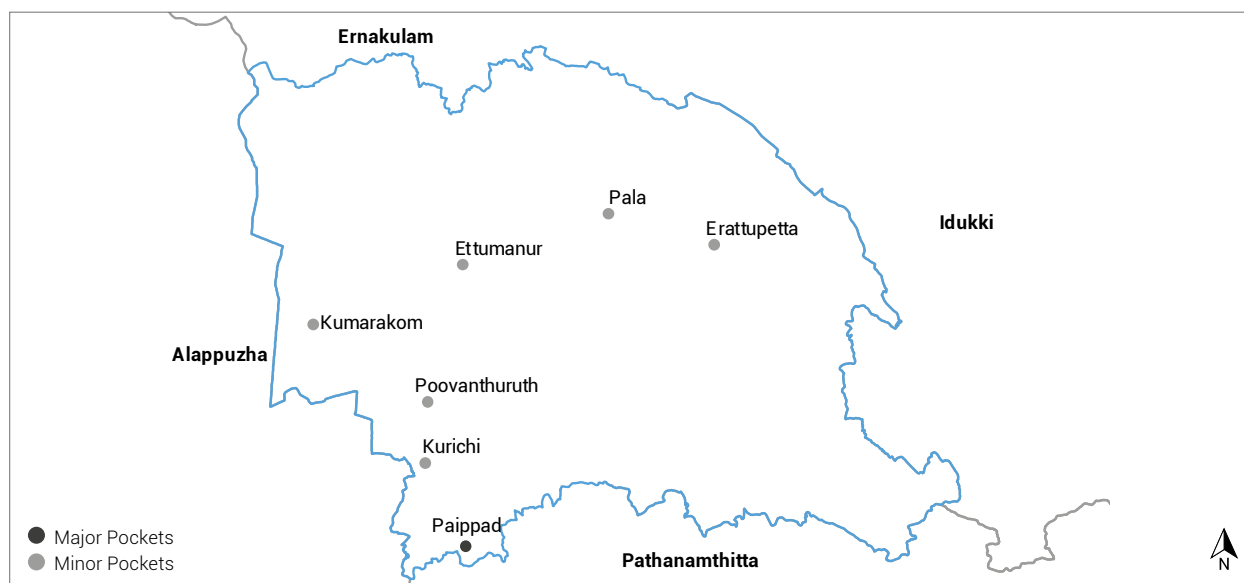
Construction of residential flats and villas are progressing fast in Kottayam town. Office properties and independent houses are also cropping up in every nook and corner of the district. Infrastructure projects like the widening of Main Central Road and modernisation of the Punaloor-Muvattupuzha Highway are also progressing fast. People from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh work in the construction sector. Workers stay on the construction sites or in facilities provided elsewhere by the companies. Kottayam Medical College, Nagambadom railway overbridge, General Hospital renovation, flats in Pala and modernisation of Changanassery railway station are some of the major construction activities in progress in the district.

## Hospitality

Most of the hotels and restaurants in the district depend on migrant labourers. Labourers from Assam, Odisha, West Bengal and Rajasthan work in the hotel industry in Kottayam. A lot of them stay on the hotel premises. Hotels and resorts in Kumarakom, a famous tourist destination, employ migrants from Dibrugarh, Baksa and Nalbari districts of Assam. People from West Bengal mostly belong to areas like Jalpaiguri, Malda, South 24 Parganas and Darjeeling.



**Figure. 26: Migrant Pockets in Kottayam District, 2016-17**



### Small Industrial Units

Cement paving blocks and cement brick units spread across the district depend almost completely on migrant labourers. A lot of the workers in these units are from Tamil Nadu, Assam, West Bengal and Jharkhand. There are also fertiliser units, cane furniture units, polymers, scraps and food processing units in the district which employ migrant labourers. Agro-based industries, chemical industries and metal-based small scale industrial units located in several industrial estates of the district also depend on migrant labourers.

### Labour Nakas

Almost all the towns have labour *nakas*. Workers gather near the traffic signal at the Baker Junction, Kottayam, and at the KSRTC bus stand premises in Changanassery.

Chingavanam, Kottayam, Ettumanoor and old private bus stand premises in Pala have labour *nakas*. Kuruppunthara, Vaikom and Erattupetta also have *nakas*. Labourers from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam and Odisha can be found at these *nakas*.

### Residential Pockets

Paippad near Changanassery is a major residential pocket of migrant labourers in the district. Several thousands of labourers live in Paippad panchayat. Most of these labourers work in the construction sector in and around Changanassery, Thiruvalla and Kottayam. Paippad is a preferred place of residence as it is easily accessible from Thiruvalla and Changanassery. Other major residential pockets identified include Poovanthuruth in Panachikkadu panchayat and Kurichy near Changanassery, Athirambuzha near Ettumanoor, Erattupetta and Pala.



# Alappuzha



Anil Chandran

Construction, 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.

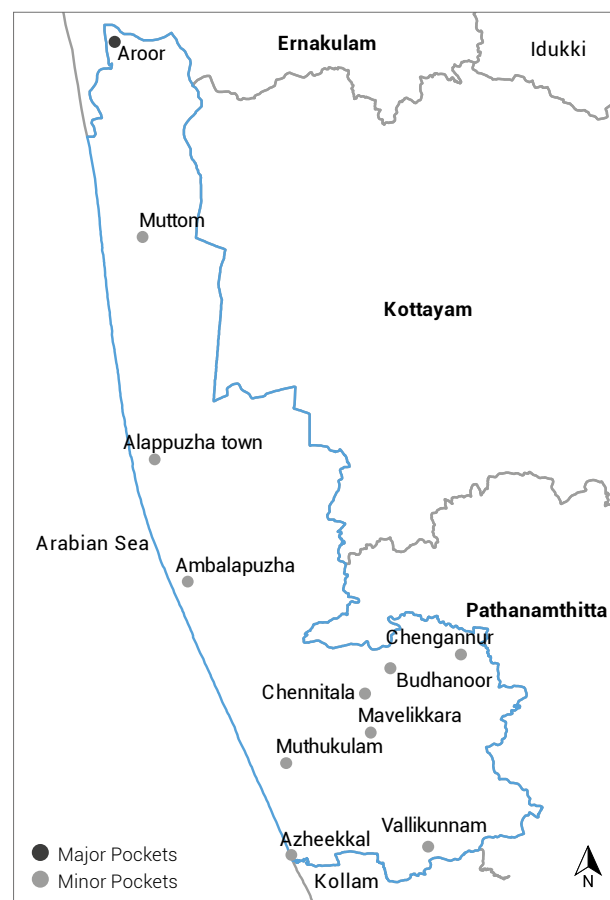
### Hospitality

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 and Sikkim 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.

**Figure. 27: Migrant Pockets in Alappuzha District, 2016-17**



### 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.





# Pathanamthitta



Arjun Pournamy

**P**athanamthitta has the lowest population growth rate among the districts in Kerala. During 2001-2011, the district registered negative population growth (-3 per cent) according to Census 2011. A major pilgrim centre in the state, Pathanamthitta is also popular for its emigrant population. Agriculture, mining and quarrying are important economic sectors. Construction is also prominent in select cities such as Thiruvalla. There are rubber plantations spread all over the district. Some rubber processing units are also present. Construction as well as mining and quarrying depends on migrant labour. Thiruvalla, Kozhencherry, Adoor, Mallappally, Konni, Ranni and Pathanamthitta town are the major migrant hot spots in the district. Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand are the major source states.

## Construction

Thiruvalla and Kozhencherry are the major construction hubs in the district. Most of the labourers who work in Thiruvalla region stay at Payippad, adjacent to Thiruvalla. Workers in the construction sector are predominantly from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam and Odisha. Tirunelveli, Madurai and Dindigul in Tamil Nadu, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Murshidabad and Nadia in West Bengal, Madhepura,

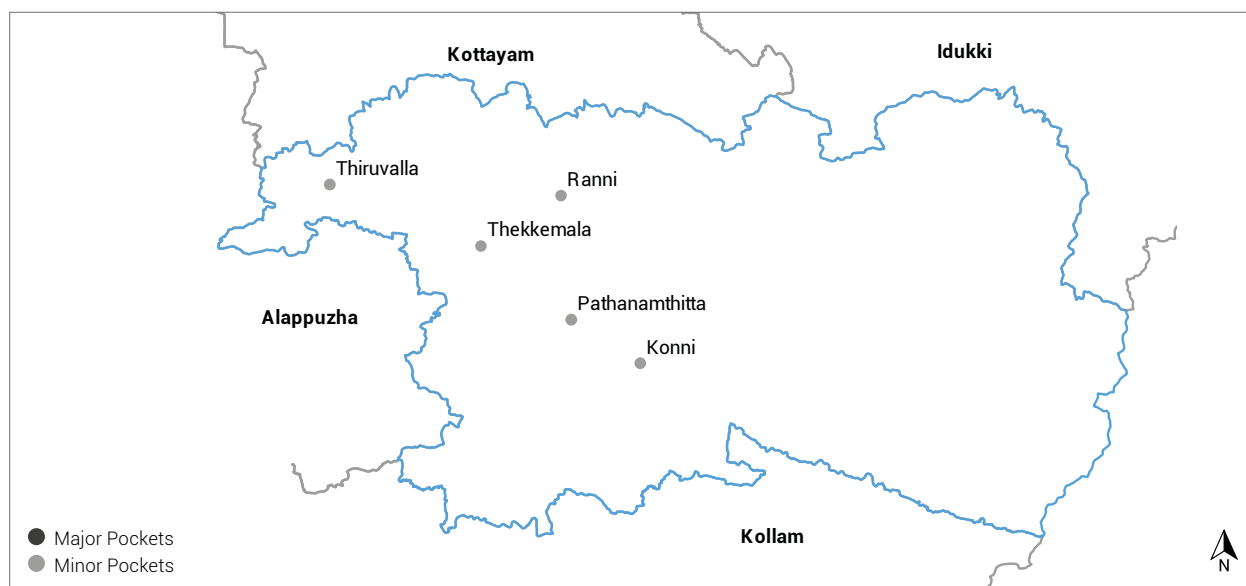
Madhubani and Purba Champaran in Bihar, as well as Nagaon and Cachar in Assam are some of the major source districts. Construction activities even in the interiors of the district depend on migrant workers. The widening and modernisation of the M. C. Road, and the modernisation of the Thiruvalla railway station are two major construction works commissioned by the government. Workers from West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh are involved in the road widening work.

## Mining and Quarrying

The hilly terrains of Pathanamthitta have numerous quarries. Granite quarrying is a major sector in the district that employs migrant labourers. Koodal in Pakkandam, Kalanjoor in Athirunkal, Erathu in Puthusseribhagam and Vadasserikkara are some of the major quarry clusters in the district. A majority of the quarries remain dormant due to the ban imposed by the government. However, there are active quarries also. Workers from West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar are employed in the quarries. As there is ban on clay mining, many of the brick kilns have been converted into units manufacturing cement bricks and pavement blocks.



**Figure. 28: Migrant Pockets in Pathanamthitta District, 2016-17**



### Labour *Nakas*

Contractors go to Paippad in the morning and recruit labourers for construction activities in and around Thiruvalla. There are *nakas* in Thiruvalla, Pullad, Kozhencherry, Pathanamthitta town, Ranni and Konni.

### Residential Pockets

Thekkemala is a residential pocket in Pathanamthitta district. Residential complexes in Thekkemala are mainly occupied by Tamil labourers. Pullad near Thiruvalla is another major residential pocket. Mostly people from Bihar stay in Pullad. There are also residential areas of migrant workers in and around Konni, Ranni and Pathanamthitta town.



# Kollam



**C**onstruction, cashew, fishing, seafood, brick kilns, mining and hospitality are the major economic sectors in Kollam. They all employ migrant labourers significantly. While local labourers had monopoly in cashew factories, migrants play a major role in private cashew factories now. Kollam has workers mainly from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Karnataka.

Migrants from Nepal are found working in the hotel industry. Kunnathur, Kottarakkara, Sasthamkotta, Bharanikkavu, Karunagappally, Chavara, Sooranad, Vallikkavu, Neendakara and Sakthikulangara are the major migrant hot spots. Jalpaiguri-Kollam, Cooch Behar-Kollam and Nagaon-Kollam have evolved as migration corridors. Cement pavement blocks and cement brick manufacturing units all over the district engage migrant workers. There are also small industrial units such as food processing, apparel manufacturing and stitching which employ migrants. Scrap collection engages migrant workers almost exclusively.

## Construction

Most of the migrants in the construction sector in Kollam district are from West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. In addition to Kollam town, Karunagappalli, Chavara, Kottarakkara, Punalur and Ochira are the major areas where construction of commercial buildings and residential properties are progressing. Construction of the Institute of Infrastructure at Chavara is one of the government-

commissioned constructions in Kollam district. Jalpaiguri and Malda are the major source districts of workers from West Bengal. Assamese construction workers are mainly from Nagaon and Dibrugarh. A lot of these construction workers are associated with local contractors. *Naka*-based workers also were engaged in construction.

## Cashew

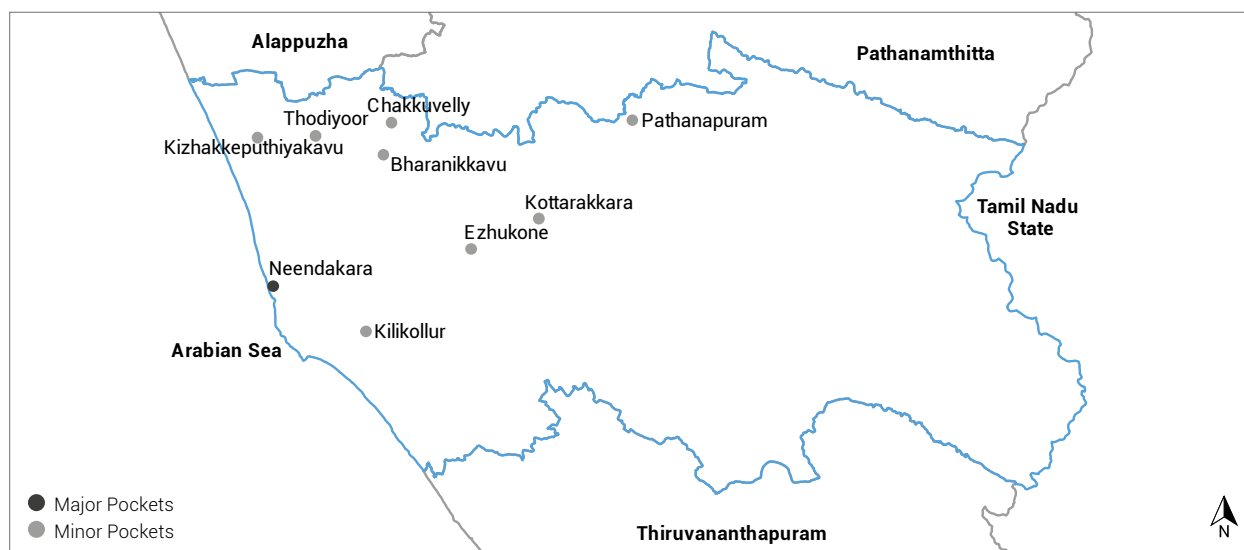
Kollam district is one of the major exporters of processed cashew in the country. Private cashew factories in Kollam now depend heavily on migrant labourers. The factories are mainly located in Kollam, Kottarakkara, Karunagappally and Kunnathur taluks. Thodiyoor, Chakkuvally, Kaithakkattukulam, Kilikkollur, Kochupilamoodu and Puthoor are the major clusters of cashew factories. The number of local women working in the factories is slowly declining. During the field visit many of the cashew companies in Kollam were closed due to shortage of cashew. Migrant workers in cashew factories are mainly from Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, Cooch Behar and Malda districts in West Bengal. There are also workers from Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Jorhat and Majuli in Assam. Workers from Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh can also be found.

## Fishing and Fish Processing

Marine fishing in Kollam engages migrant workers. Neendakara and Sakthikulangara have concentration of



**Figure. 29: Migrant Pockets in Kollam District, 2016-17**



migrants who work in the fisheries sector. Tamil Nadu, Assam and West Bengal are the major source states when it comes to fishing. Kanyakumari is the major source district for fishers from Tamil Nadu. Those from Assam come mainly from Dibrugarh, Golpara and Nagaon districts. Cooch Behar, Murshidabad, South 24 Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Malda and Murshidabad are the source districts in West Bengal. Neendakara and Sakthikulangara are also fish processing hubs. Migrant men and women from Karnataka and Assam work in the seafood industry. The ice plants along the coastal belt also engage migrant labourers. Workers from Kokrajhar district in Assam were found working in these plants.

### Brick Kilns

The brick kilns in Kollam are concentrated on the banks of river Pallikkal. Ochira, Kannamam, Pavumba, Pulikkulam, Thodiyoor and Mynagappally are the major locations. Workers were mainly from West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The workers stay on the premises of the kilns. A majority of the workers are

single men, but families are also present in some places. Major source districts are Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar in West Bengal, Nagaon and Dibrugarh in Assam, Ranchi and Gumla in Jharkhand, Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, and Buxar and Madhubani in Bihar.

### Labour Nakas

Ochira temple junction, Karunagappalli junction on the highway, Anayadi, Bharanikkavu, S.N. Puram, Kottarakkara Market Road, Thodiyoor and Mayyanad are the major *nakas* in the district.

### Residential Pockets

Cinemaparambu in Bharanikkavu, S.N. Puram in Kottarakkara and Neendakara in Kollam are the major residential pockets identified in the district. There are also scattered presence of workers in Ezhukone, Kizhakkeputhiyakavu, Chakkuvelly and Thodiyoor. Many in the fishing sector stay on the boats or in rented rooms close to the harbour.



# Thiruvananthapuram



Economic sectors in Thiruvananthapuram include information technology, transportation, hospitality, construction, fisheries, textile and apparel including handlooms, coir as well as mining and quarrying. There are also several public sector enterprises located in the district. Numerous small industrial units also function here. Except the traditional sectors such as handloom and coir, most sectors engage migrant workers. Unlike in other districts, marine fishing in Thiruvananthapuram does not engage migrant workers in large numbers. Construction is a major sector of employment for the migrants. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh are the major source states. Hospitality sector has people from Tamil Nadu, northeastern Indian states, Darjeeling district in West Bengal, as well as from Nepal. Food processing units, pavement block manufacturing units and cement brick manufacturing units scattered in the district engage migrant workers. Kazhakkootam, Menamkulam, Vizhinjam, Pothencode and Neyyattinkara are the major clusters that have been identified. Gandhi Park in East Fort is a meeting place of these migrants during weekends.

## Construction

Thiruvananthapuram is a major hub of construction activities in Kerala. The Kazhakkootam-Kovalam stretch of the city bypass is the main hot spot of construction activities. In addition to the IT parks, hotels, convention centres, commercial parks and several infrastructure

projects are also coming up. Widening of Kazhakkootam-Mukkala National Highway bypass and Vizhinjam Container Terminal are the mega government projects in progress. All construction activities depend on migrant workers.

A majority of the workers in the government-commissioned projects are from West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Workers from Malda, Murshidabad and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, Dhubri, Nagaon and Dibrugarh in Assam, Bhadrak, Balasore, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Kendrapara in Odisha, Shahjahanpur and Rampur in Uttar Pradesh, and Latehar and Deoghar in Jharkhand can be found in the construction sector. People from Kanyakumari, Dindigul, Theni and Madurai in Tamil Nadu also work in this sector.

## Textile and Wearing Apparel

The handloom industry in Thiruvananthapuram engages only local labour. Apparel units located in the Apparel Park under the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation at Menamkulam employ both native and migrant workers. Most of the migrants are from Odisha and Jharkhand. Both men and women work in these companies and most of them have been recruited through an entity facilitated by the National Skill Development Corporation. Companies also run health clinics and crèches. There are hostels for single women inside the park. Women with children or families stay outside the park premises.



## Hospitality

Thiruvananthapuram district is also a major tourist destination. The hospitality industry is a significant contributor to the district's economy. Hotels, resorts and restaurants, including small eateries, engage migrant workers. Thiruvananthapuram city, Kazhakkootam bypass, Kovalam, Poovar and Varkala are some of the areas where hotels and restaurants are clustered. Most of the migrants working in the hotel industry are from Tamil Nadu, northeast India or Nepal. People from Assam, Mizoram, West Bengal, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand can be found working in the hotels. Men from Konyak tribe of Nagaland were also found working in a hotel in the city.

## Mining and Quarrying

The sector is stagnant due to the restriction on mining. However, some of them are still functional. There is a major cluster of quarries in Mukkunnimala in the district and people from Assam can be found working here. Brick kilns too engage migrant workers. Neyyattinkara is a centre of brick kilns in the district. These kilns have workers from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam and Jharkhand.

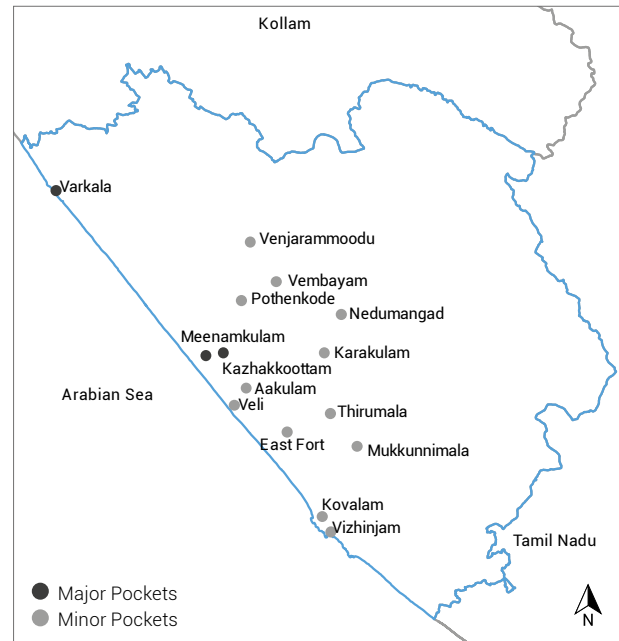
## Labour Nakas

The East Fort junction bus stop is the largest labour *naka* in the city. Labourers from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Jharkhand come here looking for work. Junctions and small towns like Kazhakkootam, Ulloor, Pulayanarkotta, Nedumangad, Pothenkode, Nettayam, Neyyattinkara, Sreekaryam, Venjaramoodu and Kallambalam have *nakas*.

## Residential Pockets

Kazhakkootam is a major residential pocket of migrant labourers. Lanes and bylanes at Kazhakkootam that go

**Figure. 30: Migrant Pockets in Thiruvananthapuram District, 2016-17**



inside from the right side of the bypass towards Kovalam is where hundreds of workers live. Thirumala in Nemom area is the other major residential pocket in the city. Veli, Meenamkulam, Mukkunnimala, Aakulam, Pothenkode, Karakulam, East Fort, Vembayam, Nedumangad, Venjaramoodu, Kovalam, Vizhinjam and Varkala are some of the other residential areas of migrant workers in the district. In most of these areas, workers stay in rented rooms or on the premises of the construction sites.







Source Districts



# Source districts in India by state

No	District	State
1	Anantapur	Andhra Pradesh
2	Chittoor	Andhra Pradesh
3	Srikakulam	Andhra Pradesh
4	Vizianagaram	Andhra Pradesh
5	Lohit	Arunachal Pradesh
6	Namsai	Arunachal Pradesh
7	Baksa	Assam
8	Barpeta	Assam
9	Bongaigaon	Assam
10	Cachar	Assam
11	Chirang	Assam
12	Dhemaji	Assam
13	Dhubri	Assam
14	Dibrugarh	Assam
15	Goalpara	Assam
16	Golaghat	Assam
17	Jorhat	Assam
18	Kamrup	Assam
19	Karbi Anglong	Assam
20	Karimganj	Assam
21	Kokrajhar	Assam
22	Lakhimpur	Assam
23	Majuli	Assam
24	Morigaon	Assam
25	Nagaon	Assam
26	Nalbari	Assam
27	Sivasagar	Assam
28	Sonitpur	Assam
29	Tinsukia	Assam
30	Udalguri	Assam
31	Araria	Bihar
32	Aurangabad	Bihar

No	District	State
33	Bhagalpur	Bihar
34	Buxar	Bihar
35	Darbhanga	Bihar
36	East Champaran	Bihar
37	Jamui	Bihar
38	Katihar	Bihar
39	Kishanganj	Bihar
40	Madhepura	Bihar
41	Madhubani	Bihar
42	Muzaffarpur	Bihar
43	Nalanda	Bihar
44	Nawada	Bihar
45	Patna	Bihar
46	Purnia	Bihar
47	Rohtas	Bihar
48	Samastipur	Bihar
49	Saran	Bihar
50	Sitamarhi	Bihar
51	Siwan	Bihar
52	Vaishali	Bihar
53	Jashpur	Chhattisgarh
54	New Delhi	Delhi (NCT)
55	Baramulla	Jammu and Kashmir
56	Bokaro	Jharkhand
57	Deoghar	Jharkhand
58	Dhanbad	Jharkhand
59	Dumka	Jharkhand
60	Giridih	Jharkhand
61	Godda	Jharkhand
62	Gumla	Jharkhand
63	Khunti	Jharkhand
64	Koderma	Jharkhand

## Source districts in India by state

No	District	State
65	Latehar	Jharkhand
66	Lohardaga	Jharkhand
67	Pakur	Jharkhand
68	Palamu	Jharkhand
69	Ranchi	Jharkhand
70	Sahibganj	Jharkhand
71	Simdega	Jharkhand
72	West Singhbhum	Jharkhand
73	Bagalkot	Karnataka
74	Ballari	Karnataka
75	Belagavi	Karnataka
76	Chamarajnagar	Karnataka
77	Chikkamagaluru	Karnataka
78	Dakshina Kannada	Karnataka
79	Davangere	Karnataka
80	Dharwad	Karnataka
81	Gadag	Karnataka
82	Hassan	Karnataka
83	Haveri	Karnataka
84	Kodagu	Karnataka
85	Koppal	Karnataka
86	Mysuru	Karnataka
87	Shivamogga	Karnataka
88	Udupi	Karnataka
89	Uttara Kannada	Karnataka
90	Dindori	Madhya Pradesh
91	Guna	Madhya Pradesh
92	Indore	Madhya Pradesh
93	Jabalpur	Madhya Pradesh
94	Mandla	Madhya Pradesh
95	Morena	Madhya Pradesh
96	Buldhana	Maharashtra
97	Sangli	Maharashtra

No	District	State
98	Bishnupur	Manipur
99	Senapati	Manipur
100	Ukhrul	Manipur
101	East Garo Hills	Meghalaya
102	East Khasi Hills	Meghalaya
103	West Garo Hills	Meghalaya
104	West Khasi Hills	Meghalaya
105	Angul	Odisha
106	Balangir	Odisha
107	Balasore	Odisha
108	Bhadrak	Odisha
109	Cuttack	Odisha
110	Dhenkanal	Odisha
111	Gajapati	Odisha
112	Ganjam	Odisha
113	Jajpur	Odisha
114	Kalahandi	Odisha
115	Kendrapara	Odisha
116	Kendujhar	Odisha
117	Khandhamal	Odisha
118	Khordha	Odisha
119	Malkangiri	Odisha
120	Mayurbhanj	Odisha
121	Nabarangpur	Odisha
122	Nayagarh	Odisha
123	Puri	Odisha
124	Rayagada	Odisha
125	Sambalpur	Odisha
126	Sundargarh	Odisha
127	Karaikal	Puducherry
128	Chittorgarh	Rajasthan
129	Dholpur	Rajasthan
130	Jalore	Rajasthan



No	District	State
131	Karauli	Rajasthan
132	Sawai Madhopur	Rajasthan
133	Ariyalur	Tamil Nadu
134	Coimbatore	Tamil Nadu
135	Cuddalore	Tamil Nadu
136	Dharmapuri	Tamil Nadu
137	Dindigul	Tamil Nadu
138	Erode	Tamil Nadu
139	Kanyakumari	Tamil Nadu
140	Krishnagiri	Tamil Nadu
141	Madurai	Tamil Nadu
142	Nagapattinam	Tamil Nadu
143	Namakkal	Tamil Nadu
144	Nilgiris	Tamil Nadu
145	Pudukkottai	Tamil Nadu
146	Ramanathapuram	Tamil Nadu
147	Salem	Tamil Nadu
148	Thanjavur	Tamil Nadu
149	Theni	Tamil Nadu
150	Thiruvavur	Tamil Nadu
151	Thoothukudi	Tamil Nadu
152	Tiruchirappalli	Tamil Nadu
153	Tirunelveli	Tamil Nadu
154	Vellore	Tamil Nadu
155	Viluppuram	Tamil Nadu
156	Virudhunagar	Tamil Nadu
157	Khowai	Tripura
158	Papum Pare	Tripura
159	South Tripura	Tripura
160	West Tripura	Tripura
161	Azamgarh	Uttar Pradesh
162	Ballia	Uttar Pradesh

No	District	State
163	Balrampur	Uttar Pradesh
164	Bareilly	Uttar Pradesh
165	Bhadohi	Uttar Pradesh
166	Ghazipur	Uttar Pradesh
167	Gonda	Uttar Pradesh
168	Gorakhpur	Uttar Pradesh
169	Lucknow	Uttar Pradesh
170	Maharajganj	Uttar Pradesh
171	Mau	Uttar Pradesh
172	Mirzapur	Uttar Pradesh
173	Moradabad	Uttar Pradesh
174	Rampur	Uttar Pradesh
175	Saharanpur	Uttar Pradesh
176	Shahjahanpur	Uttar Pradesh
177	Unnao	Uttar Pradesh
178	Varanasi	Uttar Pradesh
179	Alipurduar	West Bengal
180	Bankura	West Bengal
181	Bardhaman	West Bengal
182	Cooch Behar	West Bengal
183	Dakshin Dinajpur	West Bengal
184	Darjeeling	West Bengal
185	Hooghly	West Bengal
186	Jalpaiguri	West Bengal
187	Malda	West Bengal
188	Murshidabad	West Bengal
189	Nadia	West Bengal
190	North 24 Parganas	West Bengal
191	Paschim Medinipur	West Bengal
192	Purba Medinipur	West Bengal
193	South 24 Parganas	West Bengal
194	Uttar Dinajpur	West Bengal





## Researchers



### Benoy Peter

An expert on internal migration in India, Benoy Peter is a member of the Working Group on Labour Migration into Kerala, constituted by the Kerala State Planning Board under the Thirteenth Five Year Plan (2017-2022) for formulating programmes for the welfare of migrant workers. Peter is also a member of the expert panel that provides technical support to the Fourth Administrative Commission, Government of Kerala in refining the welfare legislations for the marginalised populations in Kerala. He has also served as a member of the Working Group on Targeted Interventions among Migrant Populations, constituted by Government of India, as part of the National AIDS Control Programme Phase – IV.

Peter has been the lead researcher for several studies across Indian states, commissioned to understand the vulnerability of the marginalised communities and workers in the informal sector towards HIV and AIDS. He has a Ph.D. in Population Studies from the Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). A specialist in qualitative research, Peter has also undergone rigorous training on ethnographic research among migrant populations, by the Institute of Community Research, University of Connecticut and IIPS. As an international consultant, Peter has worked in Bangladesh and India and has provided technical support to programmes in Sri Lanka, Philippines, Pakistan and South Africa. One of the founders, Peter serves as the Executive Director of CMID.



### Vishnu Narendran

An expert in Migration Management, Vishnu Narendran has worked in the area of migration in the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. A postgraduate in Migration Studies from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom, his major areas of interest are labour migration, international migration, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Climate Change Induced Migration and International Politics. Vishnu Narendran has also been involved in the issues of repatriation of undocumented migrants.

Prior to joining CMID, Vishnu Narendran worked among Indian migrant fishers working in GCC countries. Vishnu Narendran also has a Master's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Mahatma Gandhi University, India. One of the founders of CMID, Vishnu Narendran serves as the Director of Programmes. At CMID, he was instrumental in organising the Stakeholders' Consultation on Labour Migration to Kerala in partnership with the International Labour Organisation, Aajeevika Bureau and the Department of Labour and Skills, Government of Kerala.

## Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development

With one in every seven persons globally a migrant in an era of Brexit and Nitaqat, concerns about the increasing vulnerability and precariousness of migrant communities call for informed policies, strategies and programmes. Set up by a fraternity of international development experts in 2016, CMID is a budding independent non-profit institution devoted to migration and inclusive development, advocating and promoting the social inclusion of migrants including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees and other socially disadvantaged populations within and beyond India.

CMID commissions/undertakes research and training in relevant social issues independently or in association with governments, bilateral and multilateral organisations, civil society organisations, academia, private sector and other relevant stakeholders. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO), The Thummarukudy Foundation, Aajeevika Bureau and Department of Labour and Skills, Government of Kerala have been some of our recent collaborators.

Designing, piloting and implementing programmes for mainstreaming as well as improving the quality of life of migrants and other vulnerable populations with emphasis on promoting health and wellbeing, inclusive education, financial and cultural inclusion and facilitation of community empowerment are some of the priorities of CMID. Registered as a non-profit organisation in India, CMID provides technical support to governments and other relevant institutions in formulation, refinement and implementation of strategies, policies and programmes that promote inclusive and sustainable development.



Centre for Migration and  
Inclusive Development.

