

# Kannur

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Labour Migration to Kerala







The Valapattanam cluster consisting of the plywood industry in Valapattanam, marine fishing in Azhikkal and dredging and sand mining in Poythumkadavu is a major hub of migrant workers in the district.

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 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 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

## Migrant Pockets in Kannur District, 2016-17



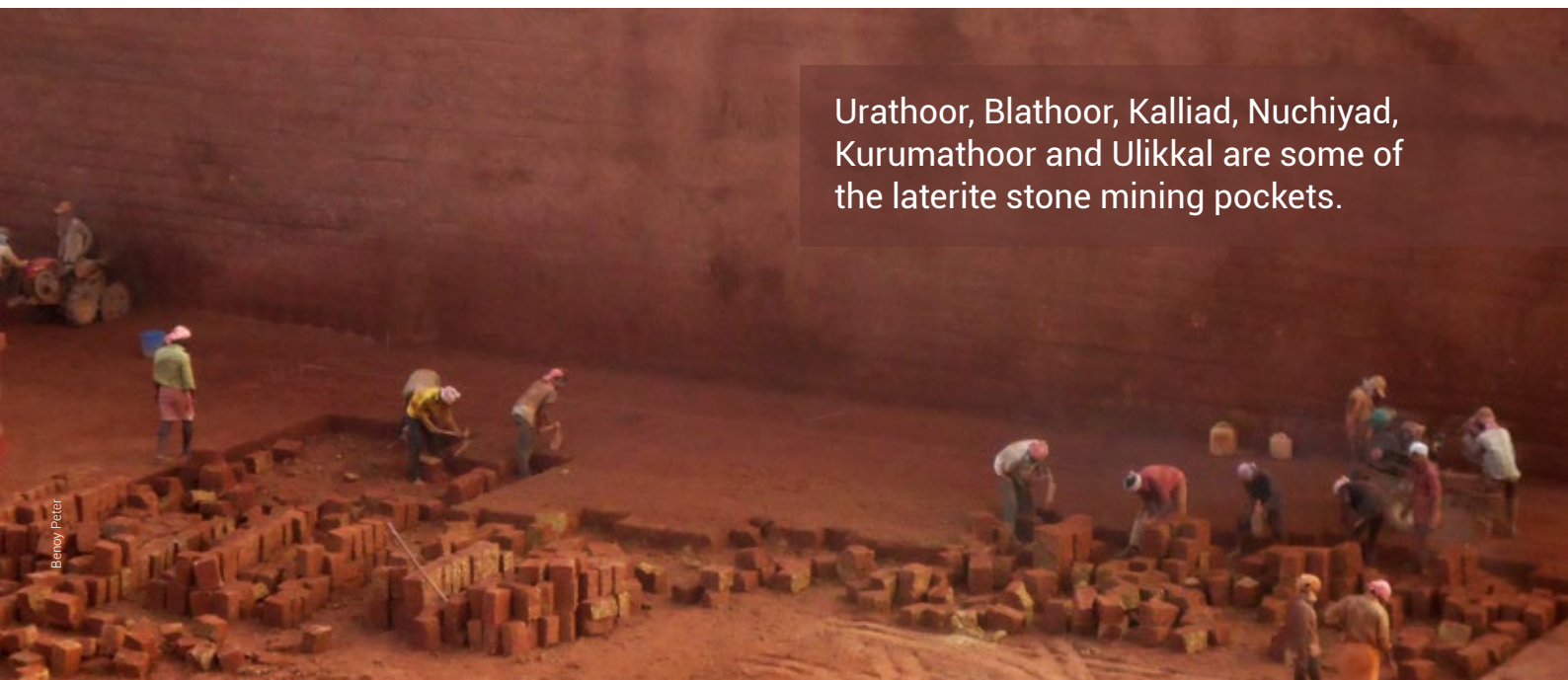
Indicative map, not to scale

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.

Urathoor, Blathoor, Kalliad, Nuchiyad, Kurumathoor and Ulickal are some of the laterite stone mining pockets.





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## Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development

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



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