

# Palakkad

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Labour Migration to Kerala



Migrant workers are found in almost all the sectors in Palakkad district, including agriculture.

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, Nellyampathy, Shornur, Pattambi and Thrithala are some of the places where there are concentrations of migrant workers. Workers with families are there in Kanjikode, Attappady, Nellyampathy 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, Thiruvarur, 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 Nellyampathy 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 Nellyampathy 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.

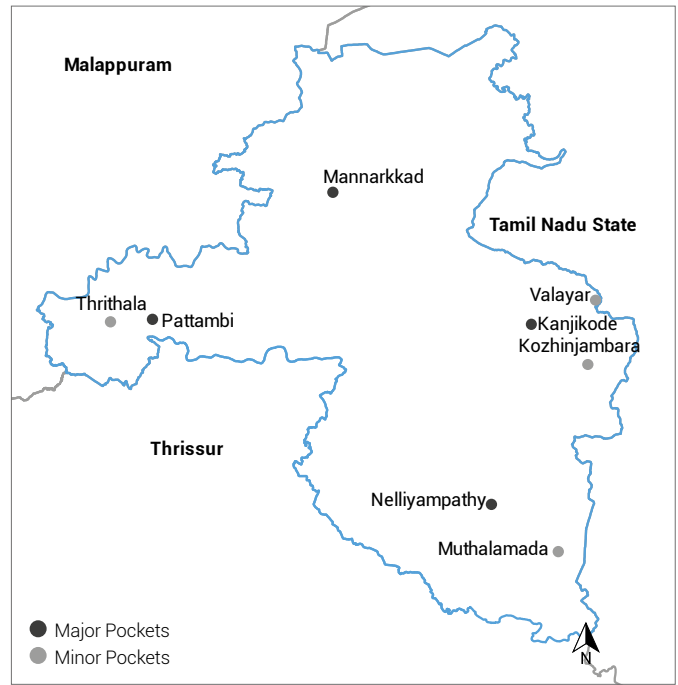
### Labour Nakas

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

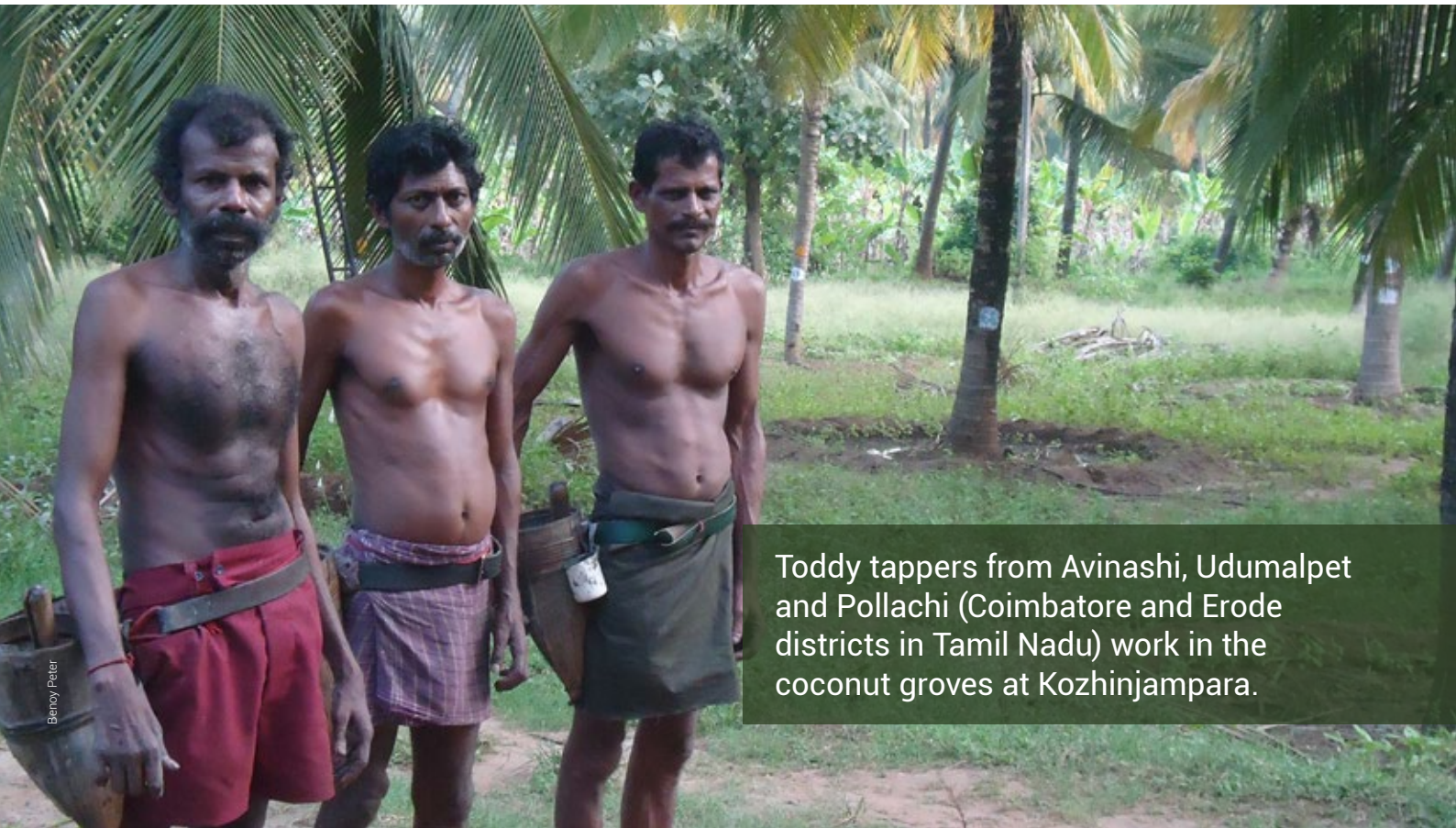
Kanjikode, Valayar, Pattambi, Nelliampathy and Mannarkkad are the major residential pockets identified in the district. Most migrant workers in Kanjikode and Valayar live within or near the factory premises. In Nelliampathy, workers live in the plantations. In Mannarkkad, workers can be found living 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 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

Migrant Pockets in Palakkad District, 2016-17



Indicative map, not to scale

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.



Toddy tappers from Avinashi, Udumalpet and Pollachi (Coimbatore and Erode districts in Tamil Nadu) work in the coconut groves at Kozhinjampara.



Iron and steel industry in Palakkad was one of the first few major destinations in the state, for migrant workers from beyond south India.

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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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