

Kasaragod

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Labour Migration to Kerala



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Kasaragod 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 north eastern 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 number. A lot of these migrant workers are here 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, Moradabad, Gonda, Maharajanj, 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 typical residential camps in vogue in 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 Stationary 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 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

Migrant Pockets in Kasaragod District, 2016-17



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.



The majority of the migrant workforce in Kasaragod is from northern Karnataka. A lot of them come with families including children. Chattanchal, Cherkkala, Hosangadi, Uppala, Velluda and Periya are some of the residential pockets.



Laterite mining in Hosdurg, Kasaragod and Vellarikkund taluks, engages migrant labour.

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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 January to June 2017.



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