

# Kozhikode

Benoy Peter and Vishnu Narendran

Labour Migration to Kerala



Vellimadukunnu is one of the largest residential pockets of migrant workers, predominantly from West Bengal and Assam.

Construction, 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, Kuttyadi, 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 undertake 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 operated 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, Mirzapur, Madhubani, Kishanganj and Katihar are some of the districts in Bihar from where people come to work in the footwear industry.

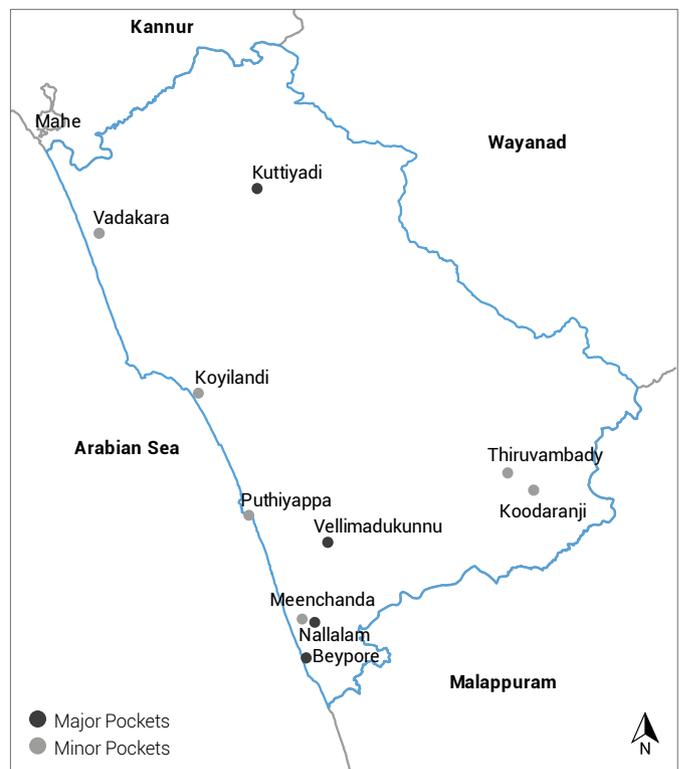
## Labour Nakas

Meenjanda 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. Meenjanda 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 Kuttyadi.

## 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 Kuttyadi also houses a significant number of migrant workers. Workers commute to various places nearby

## Migrant Pockets in Kozhikode District, 2016-17



Indicative map, not to scale

from Kuttyadi. Koyilandy, Vatakara, Thamarassery, Koodaranji, Thiruvambady and Anakkampoyil are some of the other residential areas. Anakkampoyil church had a Hindi service on Sunday evenings during December 2016.



In addition to Tamil fishers, traditional fishers from Sundarban in West Bengal as well as Puri and Khordha districts in Odisha work on boats operating from Kozhikode.



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Benny Peter

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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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