

# Kottayam

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Labour Migration to Kerala



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Over the years Jalpaiguri-Kottayam and Dibrugarh-Kottayam have emerged as corridors of labour movement.

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.

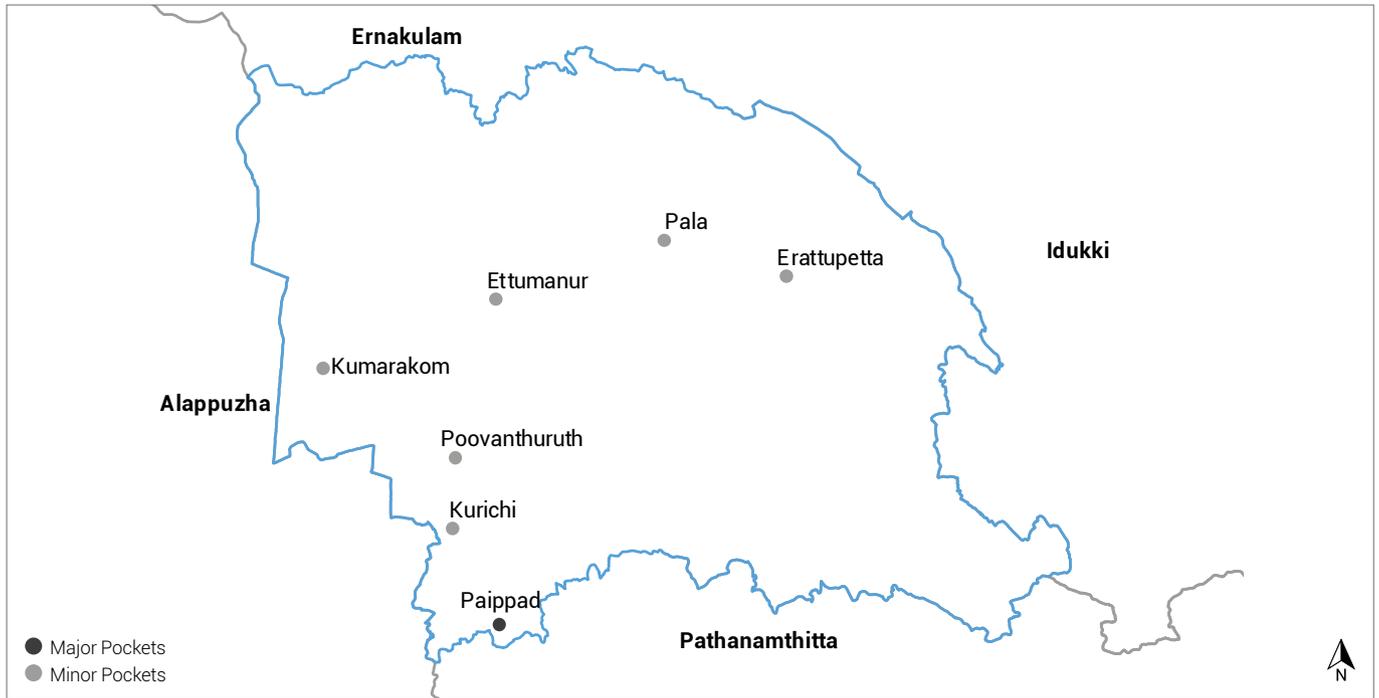
## Hospitality

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.

## 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.

## Migrant Pockets in Kottayam District, 2016-17



Indicative map, not to scale

### 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.



Fertilizer mixing units in Ettumanoor, Kaduthuruthy and Kottayam depend on migrant labourers.



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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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