

Migrants sending billions more home than in 2007

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Migrants are sending home billions of dollars more than they did a decade ago — and the rate of growth in remittances is almost double the increase in migration, according to a UN report.

The report commissioned by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said that remittances increased by 51 percent during the decade from 2007 to 2016 while migration rose by 28 percent and population in the home countries of migrants grew by 13 percent.

Most remittances (\$ 117 billion) came from the US, followed by Europe (\$ 115 billion) and the Gulf states (\$ 100 billion).

Over 100 countries receive more than \$ 100 million in remittances every year, the report said, led by China, India, the Philippines, Mexico and Pakistan.

It said the top 10 sending countries account for almost half the annual remittances: US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, Germany, Kuwait, France, Qatar, Italy and the UK.

The Rome-based UN agency which fights poverty in rural areas said the report is the first to examine a 10-year trend in migration and remittance flows.

It said the findings are based on a series of studies and surveys commissioned by the fund and on its analysis of World Bank data.

According to the report, remittances increased in almost all regions of the world, but the sharp rise between 2007 and 2016 was mainly due to Asia which saw an 87 percent increase in money sent home from migrants.

IFAD President Gilbert Houngbo said what is most important is the impact on the lives of family members and others who receive the money.

“The small amounts of \$ 200 or \$ 300 that each migrant sends home make up about 60 percent of the family’s household income, and this makes an enormous difference in their lives and the communities in which they live,” he said in a statement.

According to the report, more than 200 million migrant workers are now supporting an estimated 800 million family members around the world.

And it projects that this year one billion people — one-in-seven people in the world — will be involved in either sending or receiving more than \$ 450 billion in remittances.

“About 40 percent of remittances — \$ 200 billion — are sent to rural areas where the

majority of poor people live,” said Pedro de Vasconcelos, manager of IFAD’s Financing Facility for Remittances and the report’s lead author.

“This money is spent on food, health care, better educational opportunities and improved housing and sanitation.”

The study estimates that between 2015 and 2030 an estimated \$ 6.5 trillion will be sent to low- and middle-income countries.

Total migrant worker earnings are estimated to be \$ 3 trillion annually, of which approximately 85 percent remains in the host countries. The money migrants send home averages less than 1 percent of their host country’s gross domestic product, the agency said.

“It is truly a global phenomenon in which people, due to lack of opportunities, have to leave their families behind to provide for them,” said De Vasconcelos.

“Migration should be an option, a choice. But for 200 million people, it’s a necessity,” he said.