
UNIT 51 DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR ROLE

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51.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It is expected that after studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and concept of Diaspora Organizations.
- Comprehend the importance of Diaspora Organizations in the Development of Homeland.
- Analyse the role and functions of the several types of Diaspora organizations
- Recognize the initiatives, policy, and legal framework of Government.

51.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear Learners,

In this Unit- 51, we will discuss the role of diaspora organizations. In past decades, diaspora organizations have played an important role in the development of sending and receiving countries. Due to the increased involvement of the diasporas in their homeland, the significance of diaspora organizations have become critical. The role and nature of diaspora organizations are dynamic and diversified with their purpose and functions. They foster mutual engagement of diaspora communities with homeland, culture and society as well as encourage the development goals. Diaspora organizations are engaging in the development related projects largely for the all-round development of rural areas, villages and public sector and facilitate socio-economic aid for the amalgamation of ethnic culture, social groups and communities. Diaspora organizations also address the grave concerns of society and in advocating policy measures. In this broader context, the Diaspora organizations function for the welfare and development of socio-economic, cultural, political, educational, health and other important sectors. The present Unit provides an insight into the meaning and purpose of diaspora organizations. It provides a detailed understanding about the role of diaspora

organization for the development of countries. It also discusses the role of diaspora organizations in reinforcing the identities and culture with home-land.

51.2 MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING THE DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

The term 'Diaspora' derives from the Greek term that means 'the scattering of seeds' or 'to sow' (Cohen, 1997; Faist, 2010). The term originally referred to the expulsion and scattering of Jews and other groups such as Armenians and Greeks. The Diaspora category has been widely used in sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies to broadly understand transnational communities, dispersed from their original homeland (Kleist, 2014). Modern Diasporas are 'ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin-their homelands (Sheffer, 1986:3; Ong'ayo, 2016, Kleist, 2014).

Initially, diaspora formation took place because of the traumatic or forced exile. It is associated with a longing to return to the 'homeland'. Diaspora can be described as the transnational population which has cultural origins in the land other than one they are living currently (Singh, 2012). They are associated and integrated with the culture, caste and religious ecosystem of their homeland. They try to integrate, mobilize and organize to pursue their common goals in host-land (Cohen, 2002). The diaspora communities are very effective in addressing their issues and concerns in host-land. They try to maintain and sustain the mutual relationships with their homeland (Cohen, 2002). They are known to associate with diaspora organizations to stimulate the socio-economic and cultural linkages.

The international migration has an impact at the levels of the household, community and region in terms of a development process (Faist, 2006; Rahman & Yong, 2015 (ed.). Diaspora communities comprise of both earlier settled emigrants and contemporary migrants (skilled/unskilled/temporary/permanent migrant) and possess diverse social (caste, religion, lingual, regional and so on) and economic backgrounds (class/economic activities). They proactively maintain strong social, economic and cultural connections with their countries of origin. Thus, the effect of their belongingness is often reflected in the micro-processes of change at the level of individual-families, communities and society at large (Faist, 2006).

Diaspora community has a vital role in the homeland (Rahman & Yong (ed.), 2015). They are increasingly sending financial resources back to their families and communities in the form of household remittances, commercial investments and philanthropy (Brinkerhoff, 2009; 75; Aggrawala, 2012). They are also sharing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values learned or acquired abroad (Chanda & Gupta (ed.) 2015). The engagement of diaspora communities with their country of origin is not new, however, recent developments have accelerated the concern between Diaspora and development. Skilled migrants and professionals who move from low-income sending countries to wealthy countries often contribute back to their family in order to improve their life-choices. In doing so, they may transfer remittances and provide a welfare safety net to their respective families in terms of basic education and health (Kapur, 2004). Additionally, it may also stimulate entrepreneurship and economic gains to the family.

Diaspora and their organizations have become crucial players in the development of the homeland. The link between diaspora and development has galvanized the policy

makers to initiate new schemes, both in the home and host countries. Today, the diaspora communities are not merely the senders of financial remittances to co-development actors, but they become crucial stakeholders to bring positive changes in the development prone area (www.ae-platform.org). As discussed by Rahman & Yong (2013) in their edited book ‘Diaspora Engagement and Development in South Asia’ that diaspora organizations advocate various causes of social, economic and political change by lobbying in the country of settlement.

Diaspora organizations are also called migrant associations or immigrant organizations. The prominent types of organizations are: Hometown organizations (HTAs), religious organizations, professional organizations, media organizations, entrepreneurial and business organizations and political parties (Ong‘ayo, 2016). In the recent past, there has been emergence of various professional and occupational organizations. Some of the important organizations are: Alumni organizations, Doctors’ organization, engineers’ organizations and ethnic organizations. These organizations are benefiting their homeland through their respective goals and purposes.

Diaspora organizations are categorized into inter-related aspects of diasporas’ engagement with their homeland. They can be understood as the following: 1.) **Development in the diaspora**, i.e. the activities under which diaspora communities become developed in the country of their residence in respect to jobs, housing, welfare, benefits, cultural assimilation, ethnic food and social mobility etc. 2.) **Development by diaspora**- the ways through which globally settled diaspora networks support their native people, engage in trade and invest in businesses and promote philanthropy in the social sector for their development.

Table 1: Typology of diaspora organizations

• Hometown associations	• Alumni association
• Ethnic association	• Virtual organization
• Religious association	• Research/ think tank
• Professional association	• Art/ Cultural
• Development NGO	• Group
• Investment group	• Educational development group
• Political group	• Youth group

51.2.1 DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT IN THE HOMELAND’S DEVELOPMENT

The engagement of Diaspora communities with their countries of origin is not new. It is the recent developments that have highlighted the interest of the links between diaspora engagement and development (Yong & Rahman, 2013: 4). Diaspora engagement as a term has been used for several ways but it refers to the trans-local activities of migrants and their associations for the socio-economic and political areas of their homeland. Diaspora members usually maintain strong social, economic and cultural connections with their countries of origin. They engage in various causes and institutions which can facilitate benefits to their home countries and the people. The motivation for diaspora engagement is usually shaped by several factors that include familial practices, occupation/profession, economic conditions, role of friends/community, religion, self-commitment, etc.

Some of the areas in which Diaspora are engaged in the homeland's issues.

- 1) *Remittances*: Remittances are considered as one of the significant forms of diaspora engagement. The focus of the diaspora communities is to provide financial contributions back to their family through remittances. The term 'remittance' refers to the private transfers from migrants to their families and purposely for the private consumption in their country-of-origin (Ratha, 2005). Remittances are other than the philanthropic contribution and international aid provided by the Diaspora communities or individual migrants (Ratha, 2005). Many studies proved that remittances are the single largest source of foreign exchange flows (Kapur, 2005; 338; Rahman & Yong (ed.) (2013); Ratha, 2005). For a homeland, remittances help to access international capital, improve creditworthiness; reduce poverty in low income countries (Ratha, 2005). According to the World Bank Report (WB, 2012), developing countries receive a growing amount of remittances.

In the case of developing countries, remittances are an important source for families and which contributes to the national economy. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), remittances tend to be utilized for three purposes: 1.) family remittance and housing improvement 2.) Conspicuous consumption 3). Productive activities (improvement of land, education or health) (Singh, 2012). Many studies found that remittances play an important role in the increased investment in education and health as well as other productive activities (Singh, 2012; ...)

- 2) *Investment*: Investment is another type of diaspora engagement with homeland. Other than remittances, Diaspora communities contribute to the economic development of their country of origin through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). They possess an ownership in business as well as extend their networks at different places and contribute to the new developments in their country of origin. The investors are significant for the development purposes in their country of origin. It is observed that the investors most likely invest in their homeland as they have much knowledge and relationship opportunities of their homeland as compared to other investors. They try to connect their knowledge with the skills, knowledge and networks they have learnt abroad, which helps in synergistic advantages (Singh, 2012). Therefore, they can play an important role as intermediaries between traditional development actors and local communities.

The purpose of Diaspora investments is not guided by profit motives but it may be guided by long run considerations of establishing a base in the countries of origin. The motives and strategy of Diaspora investments are significantly different from that of traditional Foreign Direct Investment. Moreover, the diaspora contribution and investment can be influenced by the same factors which influenced them to migrate from their homelands. However, the existing information and data suggests that the investment by the Diaspora in the Indian economy is still very low and limited.

- 3) *Knowledge Transfer*: Migration and diaspora encourages transfer of human capital from a relatively poor source country to the developed receiving countries, especially in key sectors such as education, health, communication and industry. It is believed that the outflow of skilled workers diminishes domestic productivity, slows down the economic growth and increases the inequality among skilled and unskilled workers (Todaro and Smith, 2006; Singh, 2012). On the other hand, the

positive effects of skilled migration consider that they might return after a while thus proving a brain gain.

One of the significant contributions of Diasporas to development in their country of origin is the transfer of knowledge and skills. Diaspora knowledge transfer basically constitutes those with higher education and specialized skills. Skilled migrants and diasporas are most commonly defined as ‘those in possession of a tertiary degree or extensive specialized work experience’ (Vertovec, cited in Wescott and Brinkerhoff, 2006: 14). The skilled diasporas are a major source of transfer of technical knowledge and skills in the form of ‘brain gain’ and ‘brain circulation’. They contribute their knowledge and intellectual capital through short-term or permanent repatriation, short-term visit as well as virtual media (Brinkerhoff, 2008:7).

- 4) *Diaspora Philanthropy*: One of the most important ways to contribute and associate to the countries of origin is through philanthropic engagement. Philanthropy has a pivotal role to play in advancing social benefits, reducing poverty and increasing equal opportunities for the larger interests. There are several diasporas influencing factors like level of personal family ties, international financial markets, local affinity, ethnic affinity, alumni associations, religious organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), investment groups, affiliates of the political parties, humanitarian relief organizations, schools and clubs for preservation of culture, virtual networks etc (Chandrappagari, 2008: 23). Diaspora philanthropy is carried out through individual as well as group levels seeking for the long-term gains for the masses. The diaspora organizations range from very small-scale, one-off efforts of community groups to more organized and durable efforts; from the donations of single individuals to powerful networks of donors with similar interests.
- 5) *Diaspora Networks*: Another key component of the Diaspora impact on development are ‘Diaspora networks’ seen in literature as a bridge connecting developing economy insiders, with their risk-mitigating knowledge and connections, to outsiders in command of technical know-how and investment capital. Diaspora networks are helpful in several ways for example in times of emergency and relief work. The international community has concentrated predominantly on humanitarian relief, the Diaspora is more engaged in reconstruction and development, and their money reaches parts of the country where international organizations and foreign-supported NGOs.
- 6) *Diaspora Advocacy*: Diaspora organizations are seen active, vocal and influential in their countries of origin and of residence. They increasingly seek to influence government, media, corporate sector and other prominent groups and are therefore speaking up on a range of issues and political participation in their homeland. Newland (2010) has discussed this new phenomenon and shown how Diasporas utilize a variety of means to influence governments in their countries of origin and settlement, international organisations, mass media and potential allies.
- 7) *Community-based organisations*: Community-based organisations are playing a key role in stimulating change in the homeland. The diaspora can sensitize the poverty alleviation programmes, harness the knowledge and capital investment and initiate development in healthcare, education, culture and tourism etc. The

social remittances which mainly consist of the ideas, behaviours, and identities can be effectively used to affect attitudes towards human rights, girl child education, women empowerment, neutralizing use of violence to solve political disputes etc. In the current scenario, the community based organisations are playing critical roles in association with the Diaspora engagement and the support of international development agencies and organisations. International organisations such as World Bank funded some projects in the underdeveloped and developing countries for bringing the diaspora and communities in their native countries, like launching of the South African Diaspora Network (SADN) in 2001, through its Development Marketplace Competition (Chandrappagari, 2008). In India, the Telugu Women Self Help Groups is one such example of Community-based organization which involves in implementing various livelihood programmes with the help of Telugu Diaspora associations and Andhra Pradesh government’s project (Chandrappagari, 2008). The rural development projects are supporting the CBOs to enhance their livelihood and to increase incomes.

There is a need for appropriate policies, infrastructure and resources to involve the Diaspora communities in national development initiatives. There is a wide gap between perception of development by the Diaspora persons and the community’s perception of development. There should be proper understanding and collaboration between them in order to bring significant changes. Furthermore, the other factors such as psychological, intellectual and emotional attributes of the potential Diasporas for the home institutions need to be understood. The dynamics of cooperation between the Diaspora community and those at home should be studied.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : a) Write your answer in about 50 words.

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1. What do you understand about Diaspora? Describe the socio-economic role of Diaspora communities in homeland?

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2. Define diaspora organizations? Discuss the role of Diaspora organizations.

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51.3 THE ROLE OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

The terms ‘Diaspora’ and ‘Development’ have not only the inter-relationship between the two but has positive and beneficial responses for the society too (Singh, 2012). As Skeldon has pointed out in his seminal work on Migration and Development (1997), the two terms ‘Diaspora’ and ‘Development’ encompasses various issues. ‘Diaspora’ one way refers to the whole spectrum and types of mobilities or movements which reflects the homogeneity in Diaspora communities. On the other hand, the term ‘development’ has several meanings of- social, economic and political importance. Therefore, it can be argued that Diasporas are integral parts of the development process for both cause and causing change in society (Singh, 2012).

Many Diaspora literatures have supported the role of the Diaspora playing a key role in the development of their homeland. Such debate includes Jagdish Bhagwati’s idea of ‘taxation of brain drain’ to be levied on the incomes of the Diaspora from developing countries residing in the developed countries and that proceeds to be remitted to the country of origin. There are other types of development by diaspora communities which includes Diaspora entrepreneurship, philanthropy, charity, investment, political participation and so on (Singh, 2012). In recent years, the voluntary contributions or economic remittances from the Diaspora to their countries of origin which in many cases have been higher than the bilateral aid given to these countries which also overtakes the official development assistance even from development agencies (Singh, 2012; Wescott & Brinkerhoff, 2006:1).

Diaspora communities are increasingly recognized as producing economic benefits to both origin and destination countries (Brinkerhoff, 2006). They have strong connections with their mother-land, culture and society (Saffran, 1991). They have a tendency to contribute back to their home-countries as a token of gratitude. In recent past, the studies have highlighted that the benefits can be identified in different ways, including; providing high levels of remittances to the origin country, impacting on skills in the destination countries, effecting on trade between the two countries, enhancing investment in the home countries (Battiston and Mascitelli, 2007; Brown, 2010).

Diaspora organizations are particularly active in fragile, post-conflict countries where development assistance is most required (www.ae-platform.org). However, the social sector also requires direct attention for the development activities by diaspora organizations. They are active in working to fulfill vital needs of the social sector. In this regard, the development initiatives undertaken by diaspora organizations often complement those implemented by mainstream donor agencies active in countries of origin and/or origin. In this context, the stakeholders of Diaspora development have now positioned themselves as critical actors in development cooperation policy circles, both in countries of residence and origin. They have become the key drivers for a diaspora-led development sector, which is quite different from the traditional development cooperation sector, typically the domain of more developed donor governments.

Diaspora organisations can be classified into several types, nature and purposes of the development. Diaspora organizations can be understood for the development of social, economic, political and cultural sectors. Diaspora entrepreneurship is one of the important areas for the development of socio-economic sectors in the country of origin

as well as residence. Diaspora entrepreneurship has numerous possibilities for the economies of both countries of residence and of origin. Moreover, it plays an indispensable role in facilitating the development of countries of origin. Diaspora entrepreneurship is one such area where diaspora invest their finance, resources and assets to promote firms, entities and business units for economic gains (Chandrappagari, 2008). Enterprises and businesses run by the Diaspora helps to internationalize the firms and organizations. On the one hand, established networks of trade and business lead to the improvement of economic and social conditions in countries of origin.

Entrepreneurial and business initiatives can also improve the economic and social position of immigrants themselves at the macro-level. Job-creation, innovation and the revitalization of urban districts are among the advantages of these entrepreneurial initiatives. In addition to their integration aspect, such initiatives reduce unemployment and avoid recourse to social benefits. Above all, Diaspora investment creates economic, social and political capital through global networks. Moreover, their knowledge of local (business) cultures, norms and values and language expertise create social capital by virtue of cultural and linguistic understanding. As developing countries are often isolated from global flows of trade, finance and knowledge, diaspora entrepreneurship in SMEs, business, investment and trade can provide useful networks in both their countries of origin and destination.

Size and features of Diaspora Entrepreneurship

In recent years, diaspora entrepreneurship has increased enormously. The growth in communications technology has accelerated the rise in entrepreneurship and allowed it to flourish. As OECD data reveals that the relative importance of diaspora or migrants as a proportion of the total number of enterprises has increased in many countries. There has been an increase in entrepreneurship in Small and Middle Enterprises (SMEs), business, investment and trade. This progress probably reflects either an improvement in the social position of immigrants in their country of residence or indeed their difficulties in realizing their entrepreneurial potential. In some cases, entrepreneurial initiatives have emerged as an alternative way of integrating with the country of residence and of contributing to the development of the homeland.

51.4 ROLE OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS IN REINFORCING IDENTITY, CULTURE

In a globalizing world, the Diaspora organizations perform multiple roles as mediators between locations, people and institutions. According to Ghorashi (2004), diaspora organizations serve as safety nets, acting as intermediary bodies between individuals and states and playing a crucial role in reinforcing new identity (Gorp & Smets, 2015). The nature of migration is both physical as well as symbolical. The migrants do not only leave their houses, but they leave their homes. Diaspora organizations can function as stable elements within the undermining experience, offering opportunities for identification (Ghorashi, 2004).

Diaspora organization play a significant role in the everyday construction of ethnic identities. In the seminal work of Anderson (1991) he conceptualized nations as ‘imagined communities’. The concept can be applied to the constructed nature of diasporas. In this conceptualization, he theorized that members of a nation, while not knowing each other personally, have a common understanding of their community. The cultural goods

and products such as novels, newspapers and literature offer citizens shared experiences and allow them to understand themselves as members of the same community. In a similar vein, many thinkers agree that media technologies are crucial factors in the reproduction and transformation of diasporic identities (Van Corp and Smets, 2015). In this context, diasporic identities are ‘imagined’, and diasporas constitute ‘imagined communities’ in which the sense of belonging is socially constructed on the basis of an imagined and symbolic common origin and mythic past.

Diaspora organizations represent the ability to transform largely virtual imagined communities into more tangible communities of practice, as they gather participants around shared activities (e.g. celebration, commemorations, festivals, manifestations) or shared places (e.g. community centres). However, the diaspora organizations have different aims and purposes with respect of their types and nature. The aims of these Diaspora organizations can be classified through their core processes i.e. bonding and bridging. They create bonding between members, governments, both national and transnational society. They try to find support in a common identity and especially in gatherings, in togetherness among members of the same society or ethnicity (Van Corp and Smets, 2015).

Diaspora organizations play an important role in reinforcing the identity of the diasporic community or migrants. They represent their socio-economic and cultural identity through various forms, types and nature of organizational networks with homeland (Corp and Smets, 2015). The legal status of citizens enables full participation in the social, economic and political affairs in both the countries. Many times, diaspora communities are able to hold more than one citizenship or nationality; this can optimize their mobility and bridge building at social, economic and other levels (IOM, 2013).

Diaspora organizations not only build bridge between societies but also create mutual development between host land and home-land (IOM, 2013). Diaspora communities are engaged with different types of ethnic, cultural and religious organizations to remain connected with their homeland with respect to donation and financial assistance to their village, rural areas, development of temples, roads, schools, hospitals and basic infrastructure and advancement of skills and training etc.

Diaspora organizations create an enabling environment for the return of its members and reintegration with the county of origin. They contribute in addressing restricted policy areas, advocate policy for Diaspora reintegration and emphasis on transfer of assets, investments in business or any other entrepreneurial ventures by diaspora members. Diaspora organizations encourage the government of the home-country to engage their diasporas at the political levels and electoral participation. They also build capacities of governments, diasporas and their partners to create databases, skill banks and other online tools to inform and mobilize diasporas for development. They foster coherence of migration and diaspora policies with labour market planning, to create the conditions that attract diasporas back to their countries of origin (IOM, 2013).

Check your progress 2

3. Explain the concept of diaspora engagement with their homeland.

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4. Conceptualize the role of diaspora organizations in reinforcing the identity and cultural amalgamation of homeland?

51.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed about the diaspora organizations and their role. The purpose of Diaspora organizations is to encourage mutual relationships between Diaspora communities and their homeland. To do so, Diaspora organizations function to strengthen the inter-relations with the homeland, ethnic society and cultural identity. There are various types of diaspora organizations which represent members of diaspora of different ethnic, social, cultural and professional identities. Diaspora communities basically fulfill their motives towards their homeland through diaspora organizations. Therefore, diaspora organizations stimulate socio-economic and political change in the native land. In order to achieve the set goals, Diaspora communities play a key role in the functioning of diaspora organizations. They trigger the social and economic upliftment of the society by the efforts of diaspora communities. In a nutshell, Diaspora organizations contribute to the development of villages, rural regions, small towns to the larger public domain of the homeland.

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51.7 KEY WORDS

1. **Aid:** Aid is basically the transfer of resources or funds from one country to another aimed at benefitting the receiving country. Aid is also given for the purpose of strengthening one's military, rewarding a government for some action, development cultural aspects, building the economic situation and many other things. Aid is given after taking into consideration the urgency of the matter concerned.
2. **Diaspora organizations:** Diaspora organizations are a broader concept. The organizations which aim to facilitate interlinkage between homeland and hostland, channelize development in the homeland by diaspora communities and encourage nationhood among diaspora communities in the country of residence. Diaspora organizations can be of many types based on the ethnic, cultural, religion, professional, business and linguistic identities of the diaspora communities.
3. **Immigrant:** A person who leaves his/her country of origin and arrives in the country of destination, s/he may be called as immigrant in the country of destination.
4. **Immigrant organizations:** The organizations which are formed and function by immigrants are called immigrant organizations. Diaspora organizations may also be called immigrant organizations.
5. **Non Resident Indians (NRIs):** A Non-Resident Indian (NRI) is a citizen of India who holds an Indian passport and has temporarily emigrated to another country for six months or more for employment, residence, education or any other purpose. According to the Emigration Act, 1983 defines NRI as the Indian who does not stay in India and move abroad for at least 182 days in a calendar year or 365 days spread out over four consecutive years.
6. **Transnationalism:** Transnationalism is often used both- to refer to migrants' durable ties across countries-and, to capture not only the communities but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations (Baubock & Faist (ed.), 2015). The term 'Transnationalism' is a broader term which connects to all sorts of social formations including the ones already mentioned, as well as to phenomena such as networks of businesspersons and social movements. The transnational community encompasses a broader range of phenomena such as cross-border village communities or borderland communities. Thus, transnational communities encompass diasporas, but not all transnational communities are diasporas (Baubock & Faist (ed.), 2015).

51.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check your Progress 1

1. The term 'Diaspora' derives from the Greek term that means 'the scattering of seeds' or 'to sow'. The term originally refers to the scattering of Jews and other groups such as Armenians and Greeks. Diaspora community has a vital role in the homeland. Diaspora communities are increasingly sending financial resources back to their families and communities in the form of household remittances, commercial investments and philanthropy. They are also sharing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values learned or acquired abroad.

2. Diaspora organizations are organizations based in a particular place. There has been an enhanced involvement of the diasporas in the homeland which has led to the emergence of significant diaspora organizations. The role and nature of diaspora organizations are dynamic and diversified with their purpose and functions. They foster mutual engagement between home and host countries and encourage developmental goals. Diaspora organizations are engaged in the development related projects largely for the all-round development of the place of its belonging. They facilitate socio-economic aid to ethnic culture, social groups and communities. Diaspora organizations are also known to address the grave concerns of the society and advocate policy measures for both the countries. In this broader context, the Diaspora organizations function for the welfare and development of socio-economic, cultural, political, educational, health and other important sectors.

Check your Progress 2

3. The term diaspora engagement can be used in several ways that are associated with engaging, maintaining or developing a relationship with diaspora. Diaspora members usually maintain strong social, economic and cultural connections with their countries of origin. They engage in various causes and institutions which can facilitate benefits to their home country. The motivation for diaspora engagement is usually shaped by several factors that include familial practices, occupation/profession, economic conditions, role of friends/community, religion, self-commitment, etc.
4. Diaspora organization plays a significant role in the everyday construction of ethnic identities. Members of a nation, while not knowing each other personally, have a common understanding of their community. The cultural goods and products such as novels, newspapers and literature offer citizens shared experiences and allow them to understand themselves as members of the same community. In this context, diasporic identities are 'imagined', and diasporas constitute 'imagined communities' in which the sense of belonging is socially constructed on the basis of an imagined and symbolic common origin and mythic past.