Far over a century, Canadian Punjabis have influenced their ex-homes in various ways. During the last two decades, Canadian Punjabis have emerged as the most prominent part of the Punjabi diaspora and they have been expanding their philanthropic activities in Punjab. The scope of such philanthropic investment now includes not only religious shrines and education institutions but also investment in health, arts and sports sectors and more recently it has started to transform rural environment of Punjab through ‘development activities.’ This study has highlighted some salient features of Canadian Punjabi philanthropy and offers an assessment of its overall impact on Punjabi society. In addition, this study also offers some explanations for the change of direction in CPP activities towards environmental projects – in particular locating it in terms of leading Canadian Punjabis’ socialisation process, the role of intermediary agencies and Punjab government incentives.

Based upon case studies of health, developmental and sports facilities, the study illustrates some issues arising in the implementation of those projects. For health projects in the Doaba region, an issue of competitive investment in large hospitals has emerged endangering the viability of some neighbouring projects. More significant is the finding concerning management disputes among trustees -disputes which arise partly from differences in approaches by Canadian Punjabi philanthropists and their Punjab based collaborators. Such disputes could threaten the viability of a philanthropic institution. There is strong case for setting up special administrative machinery to deal with trusteeship issues, as lengthy legal proceedings are likely to deter potential philanthropists.

Although the lack of data over long period does not allow for reliable and conclusive results, still the study recommends two sets of policies based upon empirical data; first overseas Punjabis deserve an autonomous and democratic body which commands their confidence and responds to their issues. Second, the government policy of offering matching grants for infrastructure projects should be free from bureaucratic delays. The Secretariat of NRI Chandigarh should be more accountable, transparent and welcoming place for NRIS, rather than a forbidding official agency as seen at present by many Canadian Punjabis donors. Another recommendation concerns a ‘Punjab Window’ staffed by Punjabi officials in Toronto/Vancouver as part of Indian consulate services. Such an initiative can provide essential information for would-be Canadian Punjabi philanthropists before they embark a visit to Punjab. What is problematic about some of these philanthropic activities is a mixture of commercial considerations. This is especially true of many private schools established through funds by overseas donors and philanthropists. The study has argued that, CPs contribution to sports sector, although highly visible, is not as productive as it could be and there are further issues in evaluating the welfare impact of one-off activities undertaken by Canadian Punjabis.

What is indisputable is that CPs will continue to influence the Punjabi society as the process of globalisation and transnationalism continues to weaken the cross-border barriers. In this increasing exchange of ideas and resources in an interdependent world, CPs’ motives and propensities to forge closer relationships with its homeland provide both a challenge and untapped reserve of funds which the Punjab government could ill afford to ignore. This study offers an analysis of Canadian Punjabi philanthropic connections along with policy implications to improve this evolving relationship that could significantly contribute to the welfare of Punjabi society.