2.1 Meaning of Rural Development

According to a World Bank Report, rural development “is a strategy to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people—the rural poor including small and marginal farmers, tenants and the landless” (World Bank). The term ‘rural’ means an area which is characterized by non urban style of life, occupational structure, social organization and settlement pattern. Development is often defined in terms of technological and industrial development. But, development of rural areas and its people means raising their standard of living. It is the development of rural areas through the extension of irrigation facilities, construction of school buildings, promotion of education facilities, health care and road etc.

The Ashridge Conference on social development defined rural development “as a movement designed to promote better living for all in the whole community with the active participation and initiative of the community According to South African Rural Development Framework (SARDF, 1997), rural development can be defined as “helping rural people set the priorities in their own communities through effective and democratic bodies by providing the local capacity, investment in basic infrastructure and social services, justice, equity and security, dealing with the injustice of the past and ensuring safety and security of the rural population, especially that of women”.
In the words of Robert Chambers (1983), “Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural men and women, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek livelihood in rural areas to demand and control more of the benefit of rural development. The group includes small farmers, tenants and landless”.

From the above observations it becomes clear that rural development is a multidimensional process, which includes the development of socio-economic condition of the people living in the rural areas and ensures their participation in the process of development for complete utilization of physical and human resources for better living conditions. It extends the benefits of development to weaker and poorest section of rural society. It also enhances both the capacity and the capability of administrative and socio-economic development agencies and agricultural marketing units working in the rural areas.

Many of the available literatures are skeptical about the proper implementation of National Employment Guarantee Scheme. Some of the authors feel that the government lacks adequate capacity to implement EGS without large leakages and corruption. These fears are genuine as there had been problems regarding implementation of this scheme in the past.

2.2 North eastern context

The various program of rural development implemented in the West Garo Hill district of Meghalaya created some impact both on poverty reduction and improvement in village life. But compared to the investment and also the depth of the problems related to the quality of life of the villagers, the achievement was far below the expectation (Haloi, 2000). The study reveals that the success of rural development
program is limited due to lack of people’s participation and political interference in the selection of beneficiaries and multiplicity of the administrative control.

Sharma (1988) observed that the quality of life and standard of living of the people of Assam has not made any significant improvement over the twenty five year period, 1955-1980. Her study reveals that between the periods of 1975-1980 the nutritional level and leisure aspects had a fall in the state. Adhyapok (1999) in his study “Rural Development Program in Assam” found that poverty alleviation, employment and income generation of the rural people through rural development program might be regarded as strategic policy for the development of the rural economy. He suggested that selection of beneficiaries under self employment and wage employment schemes were to be done in a planned manner by the implementing agency at the grass root level.

Subramanium (2001) observed that rural poverty in North East India was below the national average in the early seventies but has gone above it in the early nineties. The poverty alleviation program had failed to achieve their targets where the chief causes of the failure were geographical isolation, poor infrastructure, and insurgency, and absence of approaches and direction of development policy. In the study it was found that extensive areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura have very poor banking networks due to poor road facilities. Traditional barter system still exists due to poor marketing facilities.

Goswami (2003) in his doctoral work explained that the various rural development programs implemented in Jorhat district of Assam fail to give satisfactory results. Certain socio- economic, political and technical problems were responsible for poor performance of the schemes.
Dynamics of Rural Development, a compiled study edited by Das (2007) points out that effective implementation of rural development program depends on the proper identification of the beneficiaries for whom the schemes are chalked out.

Enactment of MGNREGA is a bold step addressed especially to the problem of galloping rural unemployment. It commands a position of an unparalleled significance in the eradication of unemployment problem in the rural areas (Borgoahai, 2005).

Goswami (2008) also explains that MGNREGA has a positive impact on the lives of millions of people across the poorest districts of the country. He also observes that works without engagements with local contractors is the most remarkable feature of the program. He hopes that the poor people will get direct benefit from the Act.

Hazarika (2009) observed that the MGNREGA is a wage employment program, providing minimum wage employment to casual, unskilled labour, especially during lean season. Its longer aim is to generate savings and assets in the countryside, to promote a growth process based on local development. The researcher found that the program has indeed a positive impact on women empowerment, in so far as it has addressed a number of practical gender needs.

In another survey in Marigaon and Bongaigaon district (Hazarika, 2009) also found that women are becoming self dependant which implies gender empowerment in the two districts. But he also found that most of the panchayat representatives have large number of job cards which is against the Act.

Panda et al. (2009) found that MGNREGA has a significant role in women empowerment, especially the rural tribal women in Sikkim and Meghalaya by enhancing the confidence level among women and by ensuring some degree of
financial independence. On the other hand, only 42 percent of respondent remarks in a survey conducted by Panda and Umdors (2011) reveal that MGNREGA is helpful to uplift women in Assam. There has been no change in the status of women in the four survey districts except Tinsukia. Bardoloi (2011) observes that MGNREGA is able to build social relationship among the rural people and also reduces the gender difference for some works which are in practice in rural areas. So, MGNREGA is a new lifeline of the rural people who earn their livelihood as wage earners.

Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India (2011) reported that MGNREGA is slowly and steadily transforming the ‘geography of poverty’. It has great positive impact on the downtrodden states like Manipur and Nagaland.

In a study in two gram panchayats of Lakhimpur district of Assam (Dutta, 2012) during 2009-10 and 2010-11 it was found that MGNREGA is only partially successful especially in generating employment to the needy households of the study area. The study conducted by Dutta was based on secondary data.

Goswami et al. (2014) has made an overall analysis of the implementation process of MGNREGA in Assam. They found significant differences in secondary and primary data. Secondary data reveals that the implementation of the Act is poorly governed, and at the same time, primary data indicates some loopholes in the implementation process of MGNREGA. The study also found that due to the problem of payment of wage through Banks or Post offices which are situated far from the villages, the willingness of the beneficiaries to work under MGNREGA gets reduced.

MGNREGA is the most realistic approach to the problems of rural poverty and employment. By providing 100 days employment the Act actually ensures the
economic security of the rural poor (Das, 2016). Now, the government is legally responsible to provide 100 days work to the rural poor.

It is observed that among the North Eastern states, Tripura is doing well. Since, from the point of efficiency it is better than other North Eastern states. Still there are provisions and scopes for further improvement. Low level of awareness among the rural people is one of the most important issues (Bhowmik, 2013). Most of the rural people are not aware that it is a ‘right based approach’ and feels privileged when favoured by the authorities with work. Due to the lack of sufficient monitoring, the present strength is not adequate to fulfill the provision of the scheme.

2.3 National context

It was realized in various studies during the seventies of the last century that the benefits of growth can reach the masses only through the adoption of redistributive policy in the country. Most of these studies advocated ‘growth plus strategy’. Though these studies are not generally explicit in their policy and recommendations this may be considered as belonging to the growth school (Mishra, 1997).

Patel (2006) pointed out some important constraints of MGNREGA implementation and highlighted the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Most of the study conducted in different states (e.g. Jacob and Varghese, 2006; Louis, 2006; Khera, 2008; Jandu, 2008; Khera and Nayak, 2009; Khera and Muthiah, 2010; Trivedi and Aswal, 2011; Jeyaranjan, 2011; Shrinivasan, 2012) found that MGNREGA has been successful in creation of employment for women in the rural areas. Some studies (e.g. Puri, 2008; Bhatia and Dreze, 2006) reveal that MGNREGA is a successful central government scheme to improve the condition of the rural poor.
A study made by Lanjouw et al., (2008) found that high non-farm wages have had a more significant role in the diversion of labour from agriculture than MGNREGA.

A survey of women workers in north Indian states conducted by Khera and Nayak (2009) found that in many states women participation is much lower than what is prescribed by the law. But the participants felt that MGNREGA employment offers a new sense of independence to women. Payments of MGNREGA wages through bank is considered as ‘magic pill’ for ending corruption.

Ambasta et al. (2008) expects it is not possible to realize the massive potential of the MGNREGA, if we deploy the same ossified structure of implementation that has deeply institutionalized corruption, inefficiency and non-accountability, into the very fabric of Indian democracy. He expects that if the Act is properly implemented, the MGNREGA holds out the prospect of transforming the livelihoods of the poorest of the poor and heralding a revolution in rural government in India.

Khera (2009) studies the socio economic consequences of the NREGA for women workers in six states of the country. They found that in spite of the drawbacks in the implementation of the legislation, significant benefits have already started accruing to women through better access to local employment, at minimum wages, with relatively decent and safe work conditions. They also discuss barriers to women’s participation.

A critical study by Kumar (2009) observes that different wages are paid in different states and funds are not properly utilized in some states.

Jha et al. (2009) found that the size of land holding is a negative predictor of participation in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Program. The study
compares land inequality ratio of NREG and slack season agricultural wage rates, political interference, and geographical remoteness across the two study area and conclude that program capture may be an issue in the state of Andhra Pradesh, largely because of these reasons.

NREGA (Johnson, 2009) doesn’t just provide money to poor households; it provides money when they need it most, that is, when they are hit hard with bad weather.

Administrative Staff College of India conducted a study (2009) to understand MGNREGA’s processes, procedures and impact, the study found that increase in groundwater in Anantpur has resulted in the creation of assets, improved agricultural yields in Anantpur, Adilabad and Guntur districts and has reduced migration. The study also showed that the program is facing delays in wage payments and poor quality of assets.

Goswami (2009) stresses upon the rise of information technology in all levels of implementation of MGNREGA works in Andhra Pradesh and that is why MGNREGA is successfully implemented in the state. Some research papers (e.g. CAG, 2007; Vanaik & Siddharth, 2008; NCAER, 2009; Anindita & Bhatia, 2010) discuss about the wage system in MGNREGA scheme. After completion of work, wages are not paid to the beneficiaries. Due to corruption and irregularities, wage has not been received by the beneficiaries even after wage payment is made through banks.

Nair et al. (2009) observes that wage rate for women workers in agricultural works have shot up from Rs. 80 to Rs. 110 for a full day’s work. Even though many new workers are coming into the rural labour market as a result of the NREGA, many
of them are young workers, who are not willing to work in the agricultural sector. The unwillingness of workers to come for agricultural works is mainly due to low wages with more efforts in agricultural works.

Babu, et al. (2010) studied in Tripura, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal to highlight issues related to MGNREGA and Schedule Caste (SCs) and Schedule Tribes (STs) in each of the states. The study elaborated issues of MGNREGA implementation, awareness levels among the beneficiaries and other impacts of the scheme with regard to agriculture wage and migration.

Deininger et al. (2010) found that NREGS targets the poor. However, a higher propensity of participation for households playing a leadership role in the village points towards some influence of village leaders in the allocation of work. The study also points out towards significant and positive impacts of NREGS participation on consumption expenditure, intake of energy and protein, and asset accumulation, which suggest that the short term effects of NREGS on participating households were positive and greater than program cost.

North East Social Trust (NEST) carried out a research (2010) and found that BPL families have failed to get a job card and get registered in the state which is the prime objective of the Act.

Bedi et al. (2010) studied about the functioning of NREGA in Birbhum district of West Bengal. The study reveals that in order to serve as an effective ‘employer of last resort’ the program should provide proportionately more job-days during the agricultural lean season and wages should be paid in a timely manner.
Banerjee et al. (2010) found that MGNREGA is aimed at countering some of the development woes of the Indian state in the backward region. The Maoist is active in some of the most backward areas and the government has been accusing them of stalling development. Hence, the current solution operationalised by the government is to flush out those opposing development by force and then proceed with developing these areas. He examines these issues through a case study of the MGNREGA in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa.

Bhatia (2010) studied about the problem of NREGA workers who do not have banks or post offices near their homes. Their difficulties are further exacerbated if the transaction is processed through the post offices because of poor record keeping and the inability to cope with mass payment of MGNREGA wages.

Ahirrao (2010) observed that the utilization of resources available with the state government is also an important indicator to measure the success of the state in implementing the MGNREGA. The states which are able to utilize more resources reflect that on an average, they have been able to produce more person days of work and create more infrastructure in the villages.

Holmes et al. (2010) finds that MGNREGA has improved economic status and decision-making power slightly for some women in some households, mostly in terms of their own decision making on what food items they prefer to be bought for household consumption.

Bassi, et al. (2010) found that the nature of water management activities chosen under the scheme and the callous way in which these activities are planned and implemented in different regions, without any consideration to their physical and
socio-economic realities of the regions concerned, are creating several negative welfare effects.

Bhattacharyya et al. (2010) found in their research activity in three Indian states- Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan that there are serious deficiencies with regard to consumption of various nutrients in all the three states. With this as a background, they model the impact of two policy intervention (NREGA and Public Distribution System) on nutrient intake and stated that there are significant effects of the two policy intervention on nutrient intakes.

NREGA scheme marks a historic opportunity for pushing ahead with governance reforms in rural India. However, the scheme suffers from a few weaknesses in its implementation process and more effective measures need to be undertaken before its possibilities become a reality (Keshava, 2010)

Dreze (2011) found in his study that MGNREGA funds, at the initial stage of implementation of the scheme, are not reaching the poor based on misleading accounts of a CAG report. The field study undertaken indicate positive finding and show an improvement, fewer instances of corruption and leakages under than programs like the National Food for Work Program.

Tiwari et al. (2011) records that desilting has provided several sustained environmental services, including a rise in the groundwater level, an increase in irrigated area and better soil fertility, thereby increasing food production, and contributing to water and food security in the villages of drought-prone Chitradurga district In Chitradurga, about 62% of the total cultivable land is dry land. Only about 9% of cropland (63,631 ha) is irrigated. Further, 79% of the irrigated land is dependent on tube wells, 9% each on tanks and canals and 3% on open wells.
Palanichamy (2011) conducted a case study on 100 respondents where the chi-square value is less than 0.05, and the researcher concluded that there is a relationship between annual income before joining MGNREGA and annual income after joining MGNREGA. Thus it may be concluded that the total annual income progressively changes in the family because of MGNREGA. Hence there are significant changes in income before and after implementing MGNREGA. At the same time he further reports that there is a gap in getting job in MGNREGA and says that all the respondents (100) got employment only for 15 days.

Thakur (2011) has explained in his study about the role of MGNREGA and its impact on wage and work relation. In his study, he explains that due to creation of employment opportunities as a result of MGNREGA, the rural inhabitants have been benefited and there has been continuous increase in rural labour as they have been receiving guaranteed wages. As a result of this, the rural scenario has been changing and it has been affecting agricultural sector in a positive way.

Dutta (2011) found that MGNREGA has helped the rural poor. He has made a survey in two gram panchayats in Lakhimpur district of Assam. He believed that MGNREGA is the largest employment providing and poverty alleviation program launched by the government. The scheme has helped in larger financial inclusion of the rural poor and generation of job opportunities in most backward areas and has also helped the rural inhabitants to earn a moderate level of income.

Basu (2011) compared the MGNREGA Districts and non-MGNREGA districts and found that the Probability of a casual worker being engaged in public Works increased by 2.5 percentage points more in MGNREGA districts compared to non-MGNREGA Districts.
Babu et al. (2011) studied about the impact of MGNREGA on labour markets in Betul and Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh and found that after the implementation of the Act, fallow land has been brought under cultivation; there has been a change in cropping pattern from dry land crops to irrigated crops and from traditional to cash crops. Although, there was no distress migration by the sample farmers, migration continued unabated in the study area.

Sanyal (2011) in his analytical study regarding India’s rural employment program conclude that the government has taken a historic move by enacting the MGNREGA, which is perhaps the largest employment generating program in the world ensuring a one-step-ahead move towards guaranteeing the right to work in a country with a population over a billion.

Another research by Azam (2011) confirmed the analysis—Comparing 2007–08 and 2004–05, it was seen that the Fraction of days spent in public works employment increased by 1.2 percentage points during the dry season in the programs’ districts. A large part of this can be attributed to the female labour force participation directly in the Scheme. However, it is difficult to suggest that this casual labour in MGNREGA is actually labour from the agriculture sector. The shortage in agricultural labour and their diversion from farms may be due to factors outside MGNREGA. In fact, post 2004–05, there has been a negative trend in labour force participation.

Amar (2011) observed that MGNREGA has had a ripple effect in the areas where the rural workforce would migrate to and has been the single most effective mechanism to push up wages for agricultural labour, i.e. it helps in stopping or at least slowing down migration of rural workforce to urban areas.
Hazra (2011) suggested that rural employment generation programs in rural areas, if properly planned and implemented at the ground level as part of the current strategy, adopted for rural development can play the role of a catalyst to create economically productive and socially useful assets for the entire rural population and this notion appears quite apparent when we think of the emerging, sustainable as well as the potential impact of the country’s biggest employment generation program, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Parminder et al. (2011) found that due to high dependency of children, elderly and other members of the family who do not work gender discrimination against women found increasing. Women were paid lower wages as compared to their male counterparts. The unemployment rate was also found to be higher in case of females than males. If gender disparity need to be ameliorated then females have to upgrade themselves with latest technological knowhow through vocational training camps and implementation of equal pay equal work policy.

Dheeraja et al. (2011) studied the impact of MGNREGS on gender relations in 102 districts in 27 states. The study found that gender relations in favour of women increased in the post MGNREGA period. Self esteem, self image and confidence levels of women improved through their participation under MGNREGA.

Kumar (2011) in his analytical study regarding the Act found that the Act is really a boon for the rural people. If it is implemented transparently, corruption will be eradicated and certainly it enhances the standard of living of the rural poor.

Jha (2011) explains relatively neglected issue of real income transfers, net of the opportunity cost of time, under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. They have done a survey in three states, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and
Maharashtra to depict various individual and social characteristics of the population in these states as well as those of the participants in the NREGS. They also model the stochastic dominance comparisons of per capita monthly expenditures of participants with and without alternative employment opportunities in the absence of NREGS as well as the determinants of such opportunities.

Khosla (2011) studies the effect of caste reservation policies on the provision of public goods and services in GPs in Andhra Pradesh using data from NREGA scheme. The study found that the effect of reservation varies tremendously in different social, political, and institutional context, shedding light on the conflicting results of similar studies.

Using macro level data Indumatib et al. (2011) in the drought-prone states of Karnataka and Rajasthan as well as in an irrigation-dominated state like Andhra Pradesh, it observed that the impact of MGNREGA wages on the economic scarcity of labour is more prevalent in Karnataka and Rajasthan; however this impact is relatively modest when compared with the impact of hike in nonfarm wages. Though the provision of food security through the Public Distribution System (PDS) has also contributed to the economic scarcity of labour, the relative hike in non-farm wages is contributing to higher economic scarcity of labour rather than PDS and MGNREGA wages. In other words, labour is being diverted away from agriculture due to more lucrative non-farm wages.

Mangatter (2011) in his survey at Bolpur subdivision (West Bangle) showed that the MGNREGA currently fans the flames of rural entrepreneurship rather than broadly fuelling it. Merely 17 percent of the sample households could use MGNREGA assets or other incomes to run expand or start rural business. He also
revealed the causes for MGNREGA’s limited impact on rural entrepreneurship and showed what condition the act could become a catalyst for rural business initiatives.

Dasgupta et al. (2011) found that women’s participation in the NREGA has been increasing. Equal wage of men and women raise women’s bargaining power, and is potentially a critical factor in reducing gender disparities in the labour market.

Ghosh (2011), compare wage differentials between MGNREGA activities and other wage employment activities and the pattern of migration from rural to urban areas across five district of West Bangle. The MGNREGA wages are found to be higher than the wage for agricultural workers in the state and this led to the distortion of the wage labour market. Net effect of MGNREGA has been negligible.

Bonner et al. (2012) found that state level politics have minimal impact on MGNREGA’s implementation. According to them the success of the act highly depends on the strength of the district, block and GP’s administrative. In Tamil Nadu, MGNREGA’s favourable performance is primarily due to effective administrative capacity which is not seen in Uttar Pradesh. They also found that the obstacle of MGNREGA’s implementation in both Tamil Nadu and UP include the state’s reluctance to disburse unemployment allowance to workers, and the questionable productivity of assets created through MGNREGA’s public work projects.

Analysing Bhalla’s (2012) index of state level corruption on MGNREGA, Ravallion (2012) comments that though there is corruption in the implementation of MGNREGA, simple indices that claim to measure corruption and make an assessment of interstate levels of corruption can end up offering us a wrong understanding.

In an overview on food security in India, Behera (2012) observed that income generating program like MGNREGA has helped in providing support to fight against
hunger and food security. Though, a major breakthrough has been achieved in eliminating mass hunger or famine, food insecurity among the actual BPL community of the country still prevailed. The concept of food security refers to an all time access of food to all sections of population in the country.

Akhtar (2012) points out that the ecological aspect is one of the best features of the MGNREGA as it designates imbalance between human and natural resources creating a sustainable economic security through green jobs. MGNREGA has also been able to contribute to ecological restoration through its design.

Singh (2012) Reports that Women’s empowerment was not among the original intentions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), and is not among its main objectives. However, provisions like priority for women in the ratio of one-third of total workers, equal wages for men and women, and crèches for the children of women were made in the Act, with the view of ensuring that rural women benefit from the scheme in a certain manner. Provisions like work within a radius of five kilometers from the house, absence of supervisor and contractor, and flexibility in terms of choosing period and months of employment were not made exclusively for women, but have been conducive for rural women. Nevertheless, women have availed of the paid employment opportunity under MGNREGA in large numbers.

Krishnan et al. (2012) finds that 77 percent of the respondents spent more than 50 percent of their MGNREGA earned income for food consumption and also reported that they are in a position to fulfill their basic needs from this income. 80 percent of the respondents reports that they save less than 25 percent of their MGNREGA earnings due to their poor economic conditions. He further reports that
the water conservation works undertaken under this scheme has directly provided employment and increased area of paddy cultivation from 54 hectares to 71 hectares and pave the way to improve the livelihood and food security of the villagers.

Dutta et al. (2012) found considerable un-met demand for work in all states. The extent of the un-met demand is greater in the poorest states, ironically where the scheme is needed most. Labour market responses to the scheme are likely to be weak. The scheme is attracting poor women into the workforce, although the local level rationing processes favour men.

In a study at Bihar (Charan, 2012) it is found that MGNREGA ranks among the most powerful initiative ever undertaken for transformation of rural livelihood in India. The family income improved by NREGA program and it is one of the best poverty eradication programs in India (Gundegowda et al. 2012).

In a comparative study in the state Udisha and other states of the country (Kaur, 2013) discuss about women participation rate in MGNREGA. It reveals that women participation rate in MGNREGA is satisfactory in some states, but Udisha it is not satisfactory (37.39%) like other states. The study discusses some issues which hinder women participation in MGNREGA in Udisha.

Dhiraja (2013) studied in four states regarding the participation of women in MGNREGA. The study finds different factors responsible for motivating women participation in MGNREGA. The study also finds some hindering factors for the participation of women. Through linear regression analysis the studies try to find out the above factors.

Roy (2013) fined some negative factors regarding the presence of contactor and delay in payment of MGNREGA wages.
Shridhar et al. (2013) specially compares the MGNREGA wage and reservation wage such as whether the MGNREGA wages are higher than the reservation wage and factors determinants of reservation wage. Due to the differences of wages, what type of impact fall on rural urban migration and local labour market? The study found that as a whole there is no impact of MGNREGA on rural urban migration because the net benefits from MGNREGA jobs are negative.

Ahangar (2014) in his study of Shahbad block of Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir has talked about the positive sides of MGNREGA. In his study, he has highlighted the role of MGNREGA in upliftment and empowerment of women of Shahbad block. MGNREGA has provided the women with opportunities of doing works other than just doing domestic tasks of homemaking. Women have become aware of their rights and they have been taking part in decision making and implementation process. Women have been financially independent because of the schemes like MGNREGA. Women have now also become the earning members of their family.

Rahul et al. (2014) found that the outcome of MGNREGA is positive. The scheme has been beneficial in providing employment of 100 days per year to the rural poor who volunteered themselves for unskilled manual labour. The number of households in rural areas to complete 100 days employment has been on positive side for most of the states of India considered in the study. MGNREGA has been successful in supporting the process of financial inclusion of the rural inhabitants.

Kabita et al. (2014) found in a survey in Sonitpur district of Assam that performance of MGNREGA is not satisfactory in the district. The scheme could not ensure the 100 days job guarantee to the majority of the job card holders. The study
observed that the scheme fails in respects of providing employment avenues to the unemployed in a large scale. In fact the tune and essence of the Act could not shine in the state of Assam.

Krishnan et al. (2014) MGNREGA tries to achieve Millennium Development Goals and efforts are on towards total eradication of poverty by 2015. Even though there are some problems, MGNREGA is the most successful poverty eradication program introduced in India. It provides the money in the hands of poor; particularly women directly without any middlemen, even their husbands were not have the rights to receive it.

Sugapriyan, et al. (2015) has tried to analyse the performance of MGNREGA via Data Mining Technique. They have studied the workers in Kanchipuram, Walajabad and Uthiramerur blocks in Kanchipuram district. They have concluded that the MGNREGA scheme has potentially been successful in bringing the rural poor above the poverty line. It has emerged as a financial support so as to up bring the rural households to improve their standards of living and help them enjoy an improved level of economic status. More proper implementation of the scheme shall yield more fruitful and positive results.

Ravi and Englar (2015) have studied regarding the impact of MGNREGA on food security, savings and health outcomes in Andhra Pradesh. They found that MGNREGA significantly increases the monthly per capita expenditure on food and non food consumables, which provide food security to the household.

Pamecha and Sharma (2015) found in their study at Dungarpur district of Rajasthan that the Act has brought significant changes in the lives of the rural
household. In the study, 86 percent beneficiaries have reported that the annual income had risen.

Pankaj et al. (2010) studies on effectiveness of MGNREGA on women empowerment in four states of India and found that women workers have gained from the scheme primarily because of the paid employment opportunity, and benefits have been realized through income consumption effects, intra-household effects and the enhancement of choice and capability. Women gained to some extent in terms of realization of equal wages under the NREGS, with long term implications for correcting gender skewness and gender discriminatory wages prevalent in the rural labour market in India.

Goswami et al. (2014) in their study regarding the status of MGNREGA in Assam found that the Act is poorly governed in Assam because there are several loopholes in the implementation of the MGNREGA. Although the Act was envisaged to be a demand driven program, it has largely remained supply based program in Assam. He suggested that increasing the bank ATMs at the locality will help the beneficiary to easily release their wages.

Barah et al. (2014) studied on wages effect on women worker in Sonitpur district of Assam and found that women workers were benefited by raising income and were able to involve in creation of community assets, self empowerment etc. the writer also identified certain barriers to women’s access in MGNREGA.

Lack of proper knowledge about the MGNREGA program of the beneficiaries is responsible for poor performance of the Act (Techi et al. 2014). The study found that the job card holders are unable to get actual wages as per MGNREGA. Some of
the beneficiaries do not have bank account and their wages are not being credited in bank account.

Although different studies were conducted relating to the assessment and evaluation of MGNREGA in different parts of our country, a thorough and extensive investigation is still required to make the MGNREGA program self sustained and result oriented. After studying some of the well known studies in this field by the earlier researchers our study made on “Impact of MGNREGA on the living condition of rural poor: a study in Barpeta and Marigaon districts of Assam” will contribute something new to the existing literature on rural development.