

# Weapons in the hands of the mighty: An examination of social investment programmes in Nigeria, 2011 and 2021

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## Abstract

Despite the formulation and implementation of several Social Investment Programmes (SIPs) in Nigeria, poverty and unemployment are still recurring decimals in the country. Over 80 million Nigerians are living in poverty, making the country the poverty capital of the world, while 50% of the youths are unemployed, which is among the highest rates in the world. No doubt, billions of naira has been spent on SIPs recently in the country but there are no commensurate tangible results. Although concerted intellectual efforts have been invested in extant studies on how corruption, insufficient funding, inadequate implementation, among others, undermine SIPs in Nigeria, there is scanty intellectual inquiries into how they serve as means of siphoning state resources and rewarding political associates in the country, especially during the years 2011 and 2021. Adopting the Marxian Class Analysis (MCA) and relying on the qualitative method of data collection and analysis, this study uncovers that the inability of SIPs to solve the hydra-headed problems of poverty and youth unemployment in Nigeria is rooted in the underlying ideology guiding the various SIPs, which is to enrich few persons and control many others. To this end, the article argues that SIPs are, to a considerable extent, a means or a tool for rewarding political cronies and controlling dissatisfied youths. Hence, the article recommends, among others, that future SIPs should imbibe the characteristics of good governance in order to actualise their purposes, and that SIPs should be monitored by civil society organisations, anti-graft agencies and the general masses.

**Keywords:** Social Investment Programmes, Weaponisation, Poverty, Unemployment, Corruption, Nigeria

## Introduction

It is a widely acknowledged fact that unemployment and poverty are among the most significant challenges facing the modern world today. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2017), over 201 million persons worldwide are unemployed, with an additional 2.7 million expected to join them in 2019 as the pace of labour force growth outstrips job creation. On the other hand, Oxfam International (2021) observed that over 735 million people live in extreme poverty worldwide and every year over 100 million people are forced into extreme poverty in many parts of the world.

To be sure, unemployment and poverty are regular phenomena in developed and developing countries, although in different degrees and dimensions (World Bank, 2021). Many states all over the world have turned to Social Investment Programmes (SIPs) to mitigate and curtail acute poverty, unemployment, work-family conflicts and so on (Garritzmann et al., 2018). Although SIPs are not new, they have attracted an avalanche of public policy attention and intellectual scrutiny in the last 50 years (Bothfeld & Rouault, 2015). More recently, especially in the last two decades, SIPs are widely considered strong catalysts for reducing poverty and unemployment in any society

(Hemerijck, 2015). It entails the formulation and implementation of a social policy not as a cost but as a means of investment to reduce poverty and unemployment (Morel et al., 2012).

Like many other countries, Nigeria has formulated and implemented SIPs to tackle issues of poverty and unemployment. Since independence in 1960, the Nigerian state has formulated and implemented policies that fall within the ambits of SIPs. According to the National Social Investment Programme (N-SIP) (2018), over 26 SIPs have been formulated since the creation of the Nigerian state. To mention a few, policies and programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) introduced by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1979, Green Revolution initiated by President Shehu Shagari in 1979, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) introduced by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 containing programmes like Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES), Rural Infrastructures Development Schemes (RIDS) and Social Welfare Services Schemes (SOWESS) (Hussaini, 2014), Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) introduced by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2012 (Amakom, 2013), and finally N-SIP launched by President Mohammadu Buhari in 2016 are the

various SIPs formulated to checkmate the high level of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (Akujuru & Enyioko, 2019).

Despite the plethora of SIPs implemented in Nigeria, poverty and unemployment remain widespread in the country. In 2018, it was reported that 87 million Nigerians were living in poverty, and in every minute, eight persons fall into the bracket of the extremely poor in Nigeria, making the country the poverty capital of the world. If nothing is done to reverse this trend, by 2030, 110 million Nigerians will be impoverished (Brookings Institute, 2018). More so, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2017) of the total population of 40.74 million youth workers (50.2% of Nigeria's total workforce of 81.15 million), 19.3 million were either unemployed or underemployed in 2016.

Nigeria's job situation is broadly reflected in recent developments around the world. At the end of the year 2016, the global economy's growth was too weak to close the substantial job gap that has arisen since the start of the global economic crisis in 2008.

Nigeria has the highest population of unemployed labour force in the entire West African sub-region (Ogunnubi & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Sadly, despite the spending of over 500 billion naira every

year since 2016 on various SIPs, poverty and unemployment remain regular features of the Nigerian state (Channels Television, 2019). It is expected that given the amount of money invested in SIPs, there should be a commensurate reduction in the level of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

Generally, SIPs have received much attention among policymakers, think tanks and intellectuals worldwide (Hemerijck, 2018). There is a rich and robust body of scholarship for and against SIPs in extant literature (e.g., Ferrera, 2017; Hemerijck, 2017; Morel et al., 2012; Vandenbroucke & Vleminckx, 2011). Scholars of Nigerian extraction have equally explored different SIPs in the country in order to unravel their various challenges, impacts, nature and character (e.g., Wenibowei, Charles & John, 2019; Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014; Odia & Odia, 2013).

Nevertheless, scanty intellectual attention has been paid to how SIPs are used as tools by the ruling class to appropriate state resources and settle political cronies especially between 2011 and 2021. Therefore, the central objective of this paper is to address this gap by interrogating how SIPs serve as a means of exploiting state resources and rewarding political associates in Nigeria,

between 2011 and 2021. To achieve this objective, the paper is divided into five sections: the first deals with the various definitions and discourses on SIPs, Poverty and Unemployment. The second focuses on methodological and theoretical issues. The third section looks at the state of the art on SIPs, Poverty and Unemployment in Nigeria. Further, the fourth section of the article deals with the analysis of how SIPs have been turned by successive ruling parties in Nigeria into a means of sharing state resources with their cronies; the final section has to do with conclusion and recommendations.

### **The discourse on SIPs, poverty and unemployment: A contentious narrative**

Since the economic crisis of the mid-2000s, SIPs have attracted and occupied the attention of scholars, think tanks, and international organisations, among others. According to Garritzmann, Häusermann, Palier, and Zollinger (2017), SIP is now a buzzword among intellectuals, politicians and public policy analysts. Historicising the origin of SIPs, Morel, Palier, and Palme (2012) argued that SIPs could be traced to events surrounding the Great Depression of the 1930s. Specifically, they argued that the concept of SIPs became a *Force Du Tour* with the academic efforts of Alva Myrdal

and Gunnar Myrdal in 1935. Their various writings were instrumental in changing the narratives on social policy as a means of investment and not necessarily an expensive venture. Although SIPs essentially represent a contested concept because of the different postulations, conclusions and prescriptions on/of them (Nolan, 2013), they are coherent set of policies, programmes or investments formulated and implemented by a state to cater and provide succour for the needs and challenges of the unemployed, destitute, ill, and aged, among others, in order to improve their conditions (Hemerijck, 2018). More so, SIPs are those policies considered as productive factors capable of engineering economic growth, reducing poverty and creating jobs (Morel et al., 2012). No doubt they are seen by both policymakers and scholars as magic wands that can, while empowering individuals, reduce poverty and unemployment, and contribute to economic growth (Busemeyer et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the concept of poverty though experienced by the poor and observed by the rich, has become very difficult to define (Anyanwu, 1997; Forea & Benedict, 2011). The difficulty associated with the concept stems from the fact that it has defied universally accepted and objective definition or

assessment because, it is not only an expression of life situation but equally a state of mind and a perception of self in the complex web of social relation (Adawo, 2011). The term poverty refers to the inability of an individual to attain the minimum standard of living. It is a social condition characterised by inadequate access to basic human needs (food and non-food) for the sustenance of a socially acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. Some of the fundamental determinants of wellbeing include adequate food, shelter, potable water, health care, education and employment opportunities (Akintola & Yusuf, 2001). Ravallion and Bidani (1994) refer to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs; meaning a state of insufficient consumption level, giving rise to insufficiency of food, clothing and shelter. For Aluko (1975), poverty can be defined as the state of lacking specific abilities, such as the inability to participate with dignity in societal endeavours.

Also, unemployment as a concept has attracted extensive and expansive scholarly attention. To this end, there exists a considerable body of literature on the term (Kayode et al., 2014). Unemployment is a socio-economic and political condition that poses one of the biggest threats to socio-economic and

political stability worldwide (ILO, 2017). For Baah-Boateng (2013), the concept of unemployment connotes a phenomenon associated with job-seeking as a result of joblessness. Similarly, Kayode et al. (2014) regard unemployment as a situation in which people that are competent and willing to work cannot find suitable paying jobs. More so, Brandolini, Cipollone and Viviano (2006) define unemployment as the facts of several people who do not have a job; the number of people who do not have a job; the state of not having a job.

The above definitions succinctly portray unemployment as a condition or situation where an able-bodied individual with the capacity to work is searching for jobs for an extended period without success. Though not wrong, such a perspective on unemployment has been criticised for being empirically untenable (Lloyd & Leibbrandt, 2014). According to critics, the above definitions overlooked the social conditions and other influential factors of unemployment. For instance, Baah-Boateng (2013, p. 268) argues that:

In addition, an unemployed person who is available for work but who makes no effort to pursue work is defined as a worker who is discouraged rather than unemployed. In addition, a

person who works but is looking for a job to earn additional income or diversify his / her employment portfolio as moonlight cannot be defined as unemployed.

The above definitions ignore the complexities of social relations that shape, condition and characterise unemployment. For Baah-Boateng (2013), a true conception of unemployment must involve conditions where an individual willing and able to work cannot earn a good living either by being paid or self-paid. Due to the prevailing socio-economic forces that influence their condition and make it difficult or impossible for them to cater for their welfare and take care of their responsibilities, such individuals develop a loss of self-respect and esteem. Hence, the condition of unemployment is not without some attendant consequences. It represents a monumental waste of human resources, hinders socio-economic and political advancement, and serves as a conveyor belt for social vices such as armed robbery, prostitution, political thuggery, kidnapping and militancy, among others.

Going further, a detailed x-ray of the debate on SIPs, poverty and

unemployment unearths two sharply contradictory positions (Hemerijck, 2018; Perkins et al., 2004). The first broad perspective is peopled by scholars such as Hemerijck (2018, 2015), Garritzman et al. (2017), Bothfeld and Rouault (2015), Midgley (1999), among others. The unifying idea in their various arguments is that SIPs are robust means of reducing poverty and unemployment in any country. It is regarded, though in different shades, as the magic wand to exorcise the spirits of poverty and unemployment in a state. In this regard, Morel et al. (2012) argue that SIPs are those policies that are essential to economic development, poverty reduction and employment generation. Buttressing this assertion, Plavgo and Hemerijck (2020) argue that despite strong opposition, there is substantial evidence that SIPs mitigate poverty and unemployment.

However, the above perspective on SIPs has not gone unchallenged. First, it is perceived as highly Eurocentric because of its historical origin and the number of European scholars that have contributed to the substance and core of SIPs (Jenson, 2010, 2009). There is undoubtedly an overabundance of policy formulation and intellectual production on SIPs in the global North than in the global South. Secondly, the claims about reducing

poverty and creating employment have been contested, given the high rate of poverty and unemployment even in advanced countries. Corroborating this point, Midgley (1999) notes that the twin purpose of SIPs which is to reduce poverty and create jobs, has been vigorously challenged and disputed because SIPs have been seen to transfer resources from productive economic purposes into unproductive social ventures. In addition, many studies have revealed that the effects of SIPs on poverty and unemployment are not so apparent (Cantillon, 2011; Vandenbroucke & Vleminckx, 2011). Nolan (2013) critiques the core objectives of SIPs by not only challenging the empirical validity of the programmes as a platform for reducing poverty and creating jobs but equally highlighting the critical issues in the use of SIPs as a means of political and economic advocacy. In other words, the relationship between SIPs, poverty and unemployment is not strong and the programmes can serve economic and political agendas (Cantillon & Lancker, 2013). From the above, it can be deduced that the connection between SIPs, poverty and unemployment remains empirically unclear and yet to be settled in the extant literature.

## Methodology

This article is mainly qualitative and therefore adopts the documentary method of data collection in eliciting relevant information. The use of the documentary method is suitable in this context because it aids the unravelling of the hidden relations and intentions in the formulation and implementation of SIPs which ordinarily may be difficult with other methodological approaches.

Documents such as, monographs, books and articles by scholars and organisations, and even government records concerning SIPs, poverty and unemployment were interrogated especially in connection with Nigeria. Content analysis is also adopted to draw inferences and conclusions about the variables under investigation. The use of content analysis is germane because it is the technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages (Silverman, 1989). This method is applied to unravel the nexus between SIPs and poverty/unemployment properly in Nigeria.

Further, the current study adopts the Marxian theory of class analysis lucidly presented in the works of Marx and Engels (1848), Lenin (1977), Cohen (1972), Sklar (1979) and Fatton (1988).

For Marx and Engels (1848), throughout

history, the bourgeois class exploits the proletariat and the working class through the constant revolutionising of production and the uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions. According to Lenin (1919, p. 431) classes are:

Large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.

Class relations are seen as power relations; class struggle is seen as a power struggle; and class consciousness is seen as political consciousness, while class conflict is seen as political conflict (Nnoli, 2003). A group or class that controls the means of production is called the "haves", and a group or class that

does not control the means of production is called the "have-nots". Nnoli (2003) argues further that by focusing on the nature of social relations of production, Marxian social class analysis captures the complexities of human society. Below are the tenets of the theory:

- ❖ From time immemorial, the history of humanity has been characterised by the constant struggle between groups differing in the positions they occupy in the socio-economic and political formation of the state, and these positions are known as class.
- ❖ The endless historical struggle between the "haves and the have nots" might be hidden or open, but it is constant and uninterrupted and might end up in peaceful or violent reconstitution of the state. There are constant contestations between and among these groups, which might change the state's status quo.
- ❖ The class that wields political and economic power uses the state apparatus to perpetuate further its domination and subjugation of the other class/es in the society. This class, known as the ruling



class, uses the state's instruments to perpetually exploit and appropriate state resources to the detriment of other class/es in society.

It has been argued that the application of the Marxian Class Analysis (MCA) in studying political phenomena in Africa is largely difficult due to the low level of industrialisation and the overarching impacts of ethnicity and religion on the continent (Cohen, 1972). Nevertheless, the centrality of class in shaping the political process, especially the allocation of authoritative values in many African states cannot be understated (Sklar, 1979). This is because the members of the ruling class in Africa which includes but not restricted to political leaders, traditional rulers, top career civil servants, big businessmen, upper echelon of the military and police are living ostentatious lifestyles that have made them clearly discernible from the larger number of people living in abject penury in most of the African states (Fatton, 1988). This group is in charge of important socio-economic and political nodes that give them dominion over public and private spheres which they use for their own advancement (Markovitz, 1987).

The impact of SIPs on poverty and unemployment in Nigeria is better

explained and understood in the light of MCA. This is because "the haves" in Nigeria which is composed of people in power with higher income, probably having superior education and are owners or controllers of business enterprises, churn out SIPs under the guise of helping the poor, downtrodden and unemployed, who are the "have nots". But this is with the real intention of using the policies and programmes of the state for their own productive and political desires (Sklar, 1979). A critical investigation of the dynamics and manifestations of SIPs using MCA as an analytical framework uncovers class actions, consciousnesses and conflicts not just in Nigeria but in other parts of the world (Pintelon et al., 2013). As regards class conflicts, many of the SIPs formulated and implemented in Nigeria within the period under study are characterised by protests by the target beneficiaries over the poor or non-implementation of the core objectives of the SPIs, which basically revolve around the reduction of poverty and job creation (Idachaba, 2000). From the above, it can be averred that the ruling class in Nigeria uses SIPs as instruments to appropriate state resources for their selfish interests and to perpetuate their stay in power. In this context, alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment are smokescreens used to hide the core

objective of the ruling class concerning SIPs.

### SIPs, poverty and unemployment in Nigeria

The history of SIPs in Nigeria shows that their formulations and implementations are not recent occurrences. Nigeria has

formulated and implemented over 26 SIP-related policies from 1960 to date. The principal objectives of these SIPs were basically to reduce poverty and create jobs (N-SIP, 2018). Table 1 reveals some of the SIPs formulated and implemented in Nigeria over the years.

**Table 1:** SIPs formulated and implemented in Nigeria

S/N	Names of the Programmes	Year of Creation	Purposes
1	Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)	1976	To make food available
2	Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE)	1977	To make education available for all
3	Green Revolution	1980	To ensure self-sufficiency in food production
4	Low-Cost Housing	1991	Provide cheap housing for Nigerians
5	Rural Banking Programme	1977	Provide banking services in the rural areas
6	National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	1986	To serve as a platform to create jobs
7	Better Life Programme (BLP)	1987	To make life easier for rural women
8	Peoples Bank of Nigeria	1992	To provide credit facilities to poor Nigerians
9	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P)	2012	To cushion the effect of the removal of fuel subsidy on Nigerians
10	National Social Investment Programmes	2016	To fight poverty and reduce unemployment

*Note.* Compiled by the authors from different literature

The list in Table 1 above is certainly not exhaustive of the many SIPs executed in Nigeria since 1960. However, it shows some of the SIPs formulated and implemented based basically on the dual mandate of fighting poverty and creating jobs. Using Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as a yardstick, Hussaini (2014) argues that a detailed examination of the historical trajectory of SIPs in Nigeria unearths three periods: pre-SAP, SAP and post-SAP periods. He observed that during the pre-SAP era, SIPs were not directly concerned with the business of poverty reduction and employment generation. They were tied to government programmes and agendas such as education, electrification, urbanisation, and agriculture. During the SAP era, SIPs were created to cushion the high tide of poverty and unemployment occasioned by the neo-liberal nature of SAP which is anchored on privatisation and low government spending. In the

post-SAP era, successive governments in Nigeria have relied on SIPs to stem the disastrous effects of SAP which are still felt today.

Since Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999, various governments have tried to use SIPs to create jobs and reduce poverty. SIPs such as Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN), Technical, Vocational Education and Training Programme (TVET), National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP), Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), etc. did not alleviate poverty or reduce unemployment. Instead, both phenomena have skyrocketed. Nigeria, within the period of these programmes, became the poverty capital of the world; and millions of young non-disabled Nigerians were without jobs (Brookings Institute, 2018; NBS, 2021). The figure below shows the growth of unemployment in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019.

**Figure 1:** Growing rate of unemployment in Nigeria between 1999 and 2019



*Note.* Culled from Oyekunle (2020).

Figure 1 above confirms the growing rate of unemployment among Nigerian youths. In Africa, Nigeria has the highest population of young people (Subair, 2013). According to recent statistics, 21.1 million Nigerian youths are unemployed, which is the equivalence of the population of 35 African countries (Kazeem, 2020). Also, poverty within this period has become entrenched in Nigeria.

The problem of unemployment, in turn, contributes to or exacerbates the level of poverty. The Brookings Institute (2018) estimates that over 82 million Nigerians live within the poverty line, and it is feared that if this trend continues, some 110 million Nigerians will be among the extremely poor in the world by 2030. Data in Figure 2 show the trend of poverty in Nigeria from 1980 to 2018.

**Figure 2:** Growing rates of poverty in Nigeria between 1980 and 2018

**Note.** Culled from Vanguard (2018, August 21).

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/08/most-of-worlds-very-poor-people-are-nigerians-theresa-may-uks-pm/>.

From the figure above, one can decipher that since 1980 till date poverty has been increasing in Nigeria. From the data, 87.52 million Nigerians are poor in an estimated population of 198 million as at 2018 even though 500 billion naira is spent annually on various SIPs in Nigeria since 2016 (Channels Television, 2019).

### **SIPs: Weapons in the hands of the mighty**

Since 2011 till date, successive governments in Nigeria have not only formulated and implemented SIPs but

have also made SIPs a significant part of their administration. This period, which is the mainstay of this article, unearths two broad SIPs: SURE-P and N-SIPs. The SURE-P was established in January 2012 by the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Administration and contained various schemes such as Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN), and Technical, Vocational Education and Training Programme (TVET) (Mbah, 2016).

Its core objectives include the development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria; reducing of unemployment by enhancing human capital development through the empowerment of young Nigerians with adequate skills to take up existing job vacancies in both private and public sectors or become an entrepreneur of labour themselves. The scheme has the mandate to equip young Nigerians with skills in three broad areas: vocational/technical skills, life skills and entrepreneurship. It was targeted at bridging the demand gaps in eight industry areas: ICT/Telecoms, Creativity (e.g. movies, music, fashion), Hospitality and Tourism, Agribusiness, Mass Housing/Construction Artisans, Marine, Oil and Gas, and Mechanical

Fabrication/Woodwork. The training has been classified into two focus areas: Client-based and Citizen-based training (Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014).

On the other hand, the N-SIP was launched by President Mohammadu Buhari in 2016 to checkmate the rising tide of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. It contained schemes such as N-power, National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP), and Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) (Sani, Salisu, & Tijjani, 2020). Table 2 shows the detailed list of various SIPs formulated and implemented between 2011 and 2020 in Nigeria.

**Table 2:** SIPs formulated and implemented between 2011 and 2021 in Nigeria

S/N	Types of SIPs	Schemes of the various SIPs	Funding of the Various SIPs	Remarks
1	SURE-P	Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS),  Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN),  Technical, Vocational Education and Training Programme (TVET)	255 billion naira was shared between the federal, states and local governments under the various schemes of SURE-P between 2012 and 2013 (Sources: SURE-P Policy Document (2014)	This SIP was marked by a lack of transparency, accountability, inclusion, etc. The execution of the scheme was marred by widespread corruption. People in charge of SURE-P such as Alhaji Abdulrasaq Rafiu, PDP chieftain and Empowerment

				<p>coordinator, Chief Olabode George, Senator Ogunlewe, Federal Task Force Chieftain, Mr Da-Silva, Deputy National Coordinator of the Federal Task Force, Mrs Oluremi Adeniji, among others were accused of embezzlement of funds allocated for the SURE-P (Odunsi, 2019)</p>
2	N-SIPs	<p>N-power (N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Tech)</p> <p>National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP),</p> <p>National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP),</p> <p>Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP)</p>	<p>Since 2016 till date, 2 trillion naira have been spent on N-SIPs</p> <p>500 billion naira is budgeted annually for the various schemes under N-SIPs</p>	<p>While various N-SIPs schemes such as N-Power (N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Tech) seem transparent and accountable, it was designed not to end poverty or unemployment, but a means to placate and control the youths. Also, The National Cash Transfer Programme of N-SIPs was marked by corruption, lack of accountability and transparency. The vice president Yemi Osibanjo was accused of using NCTP to curry favours for his party in the 2019 general elections and also as a means for him to loot funds (Nwangwu, 2021).</p>

Note. Authors compilation from various media outlets

Table 2 shows the two broad SIPs and their subtypes in Nigeria between 2011 and 2021. From the table, it can be deduced that over 5 trillion naira has been spent on SIPs in Nigeria within the period under review. A large sum of money is always allocated and released for SIPs programmes in Nigeria, which will be eventually siphoned or marred with accusations of irresponsibility and lack of transparency (Hussaini, 2014). It appears that the more funds are allocated

to SIPs in Nigeria, the more poverty and unemployment become worse, going by the data available in Figures 1 and 2. Also from Table 2, we can observe that persons in charge of or associated with the SIPs in Nigeria are constantly accused of corruption. Many if not all SIPs in Nigeria are tainted with cases of fraud (Hussaini, 2014). Table 3 reveals cases of corruption associated with SIPs within the period under review.

**Table 3:** Alleged cases of corruption associated with SIPs in Nigeria, 2011-2020

S/N	SUREP-P	N-SIP
1	Former permanent secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Clement Illoh Onubuogo, was accused of stealing N664 million SUREP-P funds ( <a href="#">Ezeamalu, 2018</a> ).	There are about 14 000 N-Power beneficiaries alleging non-payment of their stipend for upward of four months in many states in Nigeria (Yusuf, 2021)
2	In 2013, the Senate Committee on SURE-P revealed that N500 billion (around €12 billion) out of the N800 billion (around €19 billion) meant for the scheme was missing (Uche, 2013).	The Minister in charge of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs was alleged to continue feeding students under the Modified Home Grown Feeding programme during the COVID-19 lockdown period (Sunday et al., 2020).
3	Former Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Clement Illoh Onubuogo, was alleged to have siphoned over	TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni, which are all parts of the conditional cash transfer programme was allegedly seen



	N14.1m Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme fund (Omojuyigbe, 2019).	as means of voter buying (Ripples Nigeria, 2021).
4	There former Governor of Katsina State, Ibrahim Shehu Shema and his aides were accused of stealing over N5.7bn Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme fund (Odunsi, 2019)	There was an accusation of short-changing and non-payment of beneficiaries. It was alleged that many of the beneficiaries of the N-SIPs were not paid or were shortchanged (Damilola, 2019).
5	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme trainees who totalled 51 000 were made to part with various sums of money to buy application forms, identity card capturing, vests, face caps and other accessories totalling over N79 000 under the pretext that they would get a federal job (Oyebade, 2015).	The accusation of alleged mismanagement of 2 trillion naira allocated to N-SIPs by the National Assembly (Gbadeyanka, 2020).
6	Former Kastina state Director of Finance Abdullahi Shinkafi and Former Chief Store Officer, Office of the Head of Service Bello Bindawa were accused of stealing 650 million subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme fund (Aminu, 2017).	Vice President Yemi Osinbajo was accused of using National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) to siphon money and influence voters. Allegation which he denied (Adegboyega, 2019).
7	Reuben Oluwakinmilehin Obaro and his wife, Ayodele Olubunmi Obaro, were accused of misappropriating N233.6 million Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme fund (Businessday, 2018).	The First Lady Aisha Buhari made allegations over non-payment and delay in payment of conditional cash transfer to beneficiaries. (Sunday, 2020).

*Note.* Authors compilation from various media outlets.

A perfunctory look at these SIPs will reveal that they were conceived and designed to address issues of poverty and

unemployment, however, a critical interrogation of their performance vis-à-vis mandate of poverty reduction and

fighting of unemployment leaves much more to be desired. This is because the ruling class in Nigeria has adopted SIPs as a means of appropriating state funds, rewarding political cronies, placating unemployed youths and the poor. The pursuit of vested or acquisitive interest of the unproductive ruling class in Nigeria has rendered SIPs ineffective in reducing poverty and tackling unemployment. Corroborating this position, Marx and Engels (1848) pointed out that the state is nothing but a committee created for the management of the everyday affairs of the bourgeoisie. A careful examination of SIPs in any state shows that they are largely shaped and conditioned for the interests of the dominant class in any state (Nolan, 2013). SIPs such as SURE-P and N-SIP are class-projected, designed as avenues to distribute state resources among the ruling class and their friends,

hence, their abysmal performance in terms of alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment. Perhaps this led Idachaba (2000) to observe that much of the benefits of SIPs are hijacked by the non-targeted or intended people.

The crisis and contradictions inherent in SIPs have always produced recurring class conflicts among the contending classes in Nigeria. Time without numbers, the poor and the unemployed which are the purported intended beneficiaries of SURE-P and N-SIPs in Nigeria have taken to the streets to protest the delayed or non-payment of their entitlements as stipulated in the terms of reference of the various schemes. Table 4 below highlights series of protests over non-payment or fraudulent practices associated with SIPs in Nigeria in recent times.

**Table 4:** Incidents of protests against non-payment/corruption in N-SIPs & SURE-P

S/N	Incidents of protests over SIPs in Nigeria, between 2011 and 2021	Date and Source	Remarks
1	Protests over non-payment of three months outstanding stipends at the Institute of Public Service, Kubwa, Abuja	6 December 2021, (Sahara Reporters, 2021)	Intended beneficiaries of N-power Batch C of N-SIP were not paid for three months

2	Exited Batch A and B N-Power Beneficiaries protested over non-payments of their stipends	20 September 2021, (Sahara Reporters, 2021)	The protesters demanded that the exit package for over 500,000 beneficiaries should be paid and also, the payment of 5 months backlog of stipends that was owed to over 14,000 beneficiaries
3	Over 1000 beneficiaries of N-SIPs protested over delay in payment of stipends in Ekiti State.	10 May 2017, (Daily post, 2017)	For over six months of working, the beneficiaries were not paid.
4	Protest over 4.9 billion naira job scam/fraud.	7 October 2015, (Ovuakporie et al., 2015)	Over 5,000 persons protested against the sale of jobs to SURE-P beneficiaries through a third party.
5	Over 1,000 persons protested in Benin, Edo State over non-payment of their entitlements	27 May 2015, (Oyebade, 2015)	The protesters were not paid four months salaries.
6	SURE-P participants in Kwara State protested against the non-payment of their allowance	20 November 2014, (Blueprint, 2014)	The protesters stormed the city of Ilorin, protesting the non-payment of their three months salaries.

Note. Authors compilation from various media outlets.

These various protests highlighted in Table 4 provide ample evidence on the struggle by the lower classes in the Nigerian state for equitable distribution of state resources with regard to SIPs. This struggle is a mirage because even though the state assumes and claims certain degree of autonomy, its actions

which is evident in the implementation of SIPs in Nigeria shows that it is the guardian of the socially, politically and economically dominant class (Gana, 1980). For Wolff (2017), the ruling class sees the state, its apparatus and policies, as sites where surpluses are produced, appropriated and distributed between

and among themselves and their cronies. Relating this to SIPs in Nigeria, the twin problem of poverty and unemployment are presented as the reasons for their creation, yet between 2011 and 2021, both phenomena have increased while SURE-P and N-SIPs are tainted with allegations of corruption.

### Conclusion

The current arguments on SIPs in Nigeria centre predominantly on issues of corruption, weak implementation and evaluation mechanisms, among others (Akujuru & Enyioko, 2019). The application of MCA in understanding why and how SIPs has not achieved its twin

purposes of alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment in Nigeria has been ignored in the extant literature. Nevertheless, a critical interrogation of SIPs in Nigeria between 2011 and 2021 shows that MCA is apt in explicating the obvious failures of SIPs in Nigeria as regards alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment. The adoption of this approach in the current article is rooted in its ability to go beyond the surface and unravel the crisis and contradictions inherent in the implementation of SIPs in Nigeria. The current article argued that stark failure of SIPs in alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment is due to the fact that it is seen as a means of

exploiting state resources and rewarding political cronies. It was observed that despite the number of SIPs in Nigeria and the amount spent on them since 2011, the state of poverty and unemployment have worsened in the country. The article demonstrated that cases of allegations over corruption and series of protests characterising both SURE-P and N-SIPs in Nigeria reinforce the fact that SIPs are sites for the distribution of state resources by the ruling class. To this end, the article posited that a distinct understanding of the disposition of the ruling class towards SIPs in Nigeria is relevant for comprehending their lack of success in alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment.

In fact, unless SIPs are formulated and implemented in Nigeria so that the intended beneficiaries will be captured and not those in power or closer to the corridors of power, its desired impact on poverty and unemployment will be difficult to attain, if not impossible. There is need for future SIPs to be birthed and practiced with the tenets of good governance in order to actualise its purposes; and the civil society organisations and anti-graft agencies should increase their monitoring of SIPs in Nigeria.

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