

Sudan to be used as guinea pig for cash abolition, universal basic income and total surveillance

[June 14, 2020 | Sudan has a transitional government that depends on the goodwill of the USA. This is an opportunity to use the country for the largest field trial to date, to put an entire population on the digital leash through cash abolition and a universal basic income.](#)

For several years now, the World Bank, Better Than Cash Alliance and various UN organizations have been massively promoting and advertising the purely digital transmission of financial aid for the needy in poor countries. Declared goals are cost savings and prevention of corruption and theft, as well as "financial inclusion". The latter is the real reason, but not in the harmless meaning of giving everyone the chance to get a bank account, but in the meaning of "bringing everyone into the system", as the head of Paypal, Dan Schulman, defined it at a [Financial Inclusion Forum](#) in Washington in 2015.

The system is the one in which Paypal, Microsoft and Co. can make money with every transaction and, as Microsoft founder Bill Gates made clear at the same event, in which the US government can track, save and if necessary block every transaction.

After India has successfully served as a guinea pig for both the (temporary) removal of cash and the biometric registration of more than a billion people in a central government run database, it is now Sudan's turn. Now comes a test of how well one can "bring into the system" and control a partially rebellious and fundamentalist population of a large, underdeveloped country with digital alms.

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Another member of The Better Than Cash Alliance

The starting point for this story was a tweet from the Better Than Cash Alliance, which praised Sudan's commitment to accelerate the transition from cash to digital payments. In this alliance, which was established in 2012, the U.S. government, Visa, Mastercard, Citibank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have joined together as core members to drive the global elimination of cash. It works together closely with the World Bank-led Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), whose core membership overlaps with the Better Than Cash Alliance.

The Better Than Cash Alliance announced in a [press release](#) on June 10th with its typical false do-gooder pathos:

As part of its vision to transform its economy, the Republic of Sudan announced today a new commitment to accelerate the transition from cash to digital payments. By joining the United Nations-based Better Than Cash Alliance, the government commits to increasing financial inclusion and transparency, taking steps to build an economy that benefits all citizens.

Transparency means better monitoring of money flows. Sudan is a country with an economy destroyed by terror, civil war and US sanctions. In this situation, it would be quite strange to make pushing back the use of cash the central pillar of economic policy.

But of course, they do not do such strange things voluntarily, but under massive pressure and with a carrot

dangling in front of their nose. The carrot is called Sudan Family Support Program. It is financed by the World Bank, a close ally of the Better Than Cash Alliance. The Alliance writes about it:

Moving from cash to responsible digital payments is central to the government's economic recovery and reform strategy. In particular, digital payments will be critical to the success of the recently announced Sudan Family Support Program, which will provide monthly direct digital transfers to around 80 percent of Sudanese families. The Program seeks to spur economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve food security and health throughout the country.

The program is supposed to provide 32 million people with a minimal basic income. According to a [World Bank document](#) from April, the Sudan Family Support Program (ID P173521), is due to be approved by the World Bank Board on June 16. Does the Sudanese Government joining the Better Than Cash Alliance on 10 June have anything to do with this? One cannot help but suspect it.

Already on May 29, the government concluded an agreement with the UN World Food Program to support it with technical assistance. The Sudanese people and the world are apparently not supposed to know that the money comes essentially from the World Bank and that it is a World Bank project. The World Food Program's [announcement](#) and the [media reports](#) based on it stated that this was one of the most important undertakings of the transitional government and that it was being financed "by the government and partners". The Better Than Cash Alliance did not mention the World Bank in their press release, either.

It is true that the World Bank is rather stingy in its assessment of this basic income. It is going to be five dollars per person and month. The calculation is probably that the people you want to bring into the system are poor enough that five additional dollars a month can motivate most of them to participate in this program.

As usual, the Better Than Cash Alliance calls itself "UN-based" in its press release to give the appearance of belonging to the UN. In reality the basis for this claim is simply, that it has bribed an independent cash-strapped UN sub-organization called UNCDF to [let the Alliance have a secretariat](#) on its own premises in New York.

A dependent country with familiar government personnel

The Republic of Sudan is a predominantly Muslim country and has a major problem with fundamentalist groups, famine and civil wars. Despite a per capita gross domestic product that is respectable by African standards, a large part of the population lives in abject poverty due to the extremely unequal distribution. The USA has been for a long time and still is listing the country on its exclusive [list of state sponsors of terror](#), together with North Korea, Iran and Syria. This means that it has traditionally received very little financial support from international organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF and also from other governments. Since the oil-rich South Sudan split off in 2011, there has been a chronic shortage of foreign exchange.

Last year, after months of protests and demonstrations, a military coup deposed dictator Omar al-Bashir and then the protesters wrested a joint interim government from the new junta. This interim government has been in power since September 2019.

The voluntary commitment to abolish cash and the accession to the Better Than Cash Alliance are the work of the [interim finance minister Ibrahim Elbadawi](#). The US-trained economist had previously worked for the World Bank in Washington for many years. Since 2009, he has also been a Visiting Research Fellow at the [Center for Global Development](#) in Washington, which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and dutifully provides research to the taste of its main sponsor, showing that digital financial inclusion is important and helpful.

Money and more

Blog by Norbert Häring
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Prime Minister [Abdalla Hamdok](#) is a British-trained economist who previously worked for the UN as Deputy Executive Director of the Economic Commission for Africa.

The purse strings are loosened a bit

In December 2019, the thaw in the US-Sudan relationship was reflected in the fact that Prime Minister Hamdok was invited to Washington for a [six-day visit](#), where he met with representatives of the US State Department, as well as the Finance and Defence Departments and the CIA, as well as development agency USAID, a core member of the Better Than Cash Alliance, and the entire leadership of the World Bank.

Although the US has kept Sudan on its terrorist list, the new government has received financial support from the US allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and, in the form of the Family Support Program, possibly even from the World Bank. For the government of a country suffering from an extreme shortage of foreign exchange, nearly two billion a year under this program is a lot of money.

So the government has every reason to play along with the large-scale population monitoring and control experiment that Washington plans to conduct in the country. Not only because of the money, but above all because of the prospect of being taken off the devastating terror list if the experiment succeeds and helps to take away the support of insurgents in the population, to track them down and neutralize them in one way or another.

If it is possible to biometrically register the population in the embattled rural areas, and to link them to a mobile phone as a surveillance device, this would be a big step towards this goal. It would make it possible, for example, whenever rebels are identified, to track their telephone contacts and who has been near him repeatedly. You could make sure that it is known that anyone who is suspected of contact with insurgents will lose their monthly extra dollars immediately.

The larger scheme: Universal Basic Income

This field experiment is part of a much larger program of world improvement in the spirit of the Silicon Valley billionaires and their comrades-in-arms in Washington and New York. Under the name Universal Basic Income, they propagate the renunciation of traditional development policies that at least pretend to help countries develop. Instead, direct digital payments to the mobile phones of the poorest people would save these from starvation and ensure that they stay or go where those in charge want them to be.

A project of some Harvard economists called GiveDirectly, [promoted by the World Economic Forum and the World Bank](#), has already had some success in redirecting donations from well-meaning people, from so-called philanthropists and from governments and international organizations away from development project aid to this new type of aid in the form of individualized alms.

The supporters of GiveDirectly overlap strongly with those of the anti-cash campaign. This is no coincidence, given that the two projects complement each other nicely in terms of the goal of "bringing everyone into the system" and thus improving the monitoring and control of the world's population.

This post will be updated soon.

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