

Thanks, Bono, but No Thanks

DAMBISA MOYO IS HAVING HER MOMENT. THE BEAUTIFUL
Zambian economist, formerly of Goldman Sachs and educated at Harvard and Oxford, arrives in New York this week to launch her new book, "Dead Aid." The billionaire publisher Steve Forbes is throwing her a party at the Four Seasons. She is scheduled to appear on "Charlie Rose." These titans of the media establishment are not pursuing Moyo

for her beauty or her résumé (though these don't hurt). What attracts them is her provocative argument. "Dead Aid"—a tiny volume, forcefully written—insists that foreign aid (a trillion dollars over the past 60 years) is a waste: it's bad for Africa, she says—and for Africans. Aid, Moyo argues, keeps Africa in a supplicant's role when its governments need to become self-sufficient. She recommends shutting off all foreign aid to African within 10 years.

Moyo believes this dependency relationship is perpetuated by Western governments and glorified by the celebrities who have made Africa their cause du jour. The book takes special aim at the rock star Bono, who has become the world's most prominent spokesperson for the people of Africa. "The problem that Africa is really suffering from," she told me, "is negative PR. If there is a criticism I would level against celebrities—they have tended to perpetuate negative stereotypes. They always tend to portray Africa as a horrendous basket case. They want to portray the war, the poverty, the disease, the corruption. As an African, I'm tired of it." Doesn't a photograph of a celebrity with an impoverished child raise the world's consciousness? Moyo says no. "Taking a picture with a starving African child—that doesn't help me raise an African child to believe she can be an engineer or a doctor." Instead of aid, Moyo recommends other paths to financial and democratic independence: bond issues, trade, foreign investment. "We know what works. We've seen China do it. We've seen India do it."

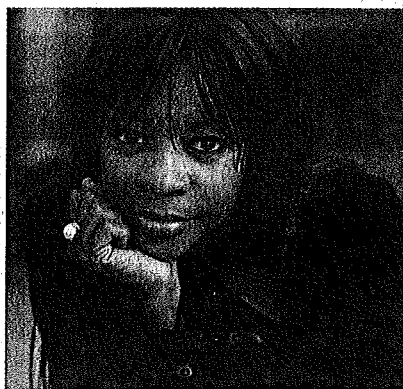
To anyone who has ever thought that those celebrity shots with impoverished children are vaguely creepy, Moyo presents a refreshing view. But even before the official publication of "Dead

Aid," the development world is in an uproar. Jamie Drummond, who together with Bono founded the advocacy group One, is incensed. Good aid—what he calls "smart aid," which helps people build businesses and take care of their own children—is not only beneficial, it's necessary. Without it, people would die. "Dead Aid,"

he believes, is "a poor polemic, with nothing new of substance, filled with anecdotal micro-examples which ignore mountains of evidence." Further, he accuses Moyo of using Bono to her own advantage: "By putting these highly visible figures in the cross hairs she knows she can market her book." Moyo responds that the book really has nothing to do with Bono; "The African issue should be championed by the African leaders charged with delivering long-term growth for their people. Anyone else offering opinions is pretty much moot."

Moyo does not explicitly address the question of faith-based aid in her

book. But religion, she says, "doesn't highlight the most positive and productive aspects of Africa," and she is unmoved by the vogue among American churchgoers for mission work: "What's the point of going to Africa and saying, 'Oh, my God, I'm so traumatized by the poverty there?' ... People like to pity Africans." One sees her point—but it's easy to be sympathetic to the other side as well. Rich Stearns, the president of World Vision, a Christian aid organization, says his religious faith moves him to "want to assist others." "I always think, what if they were my children? I refuse to turn my back on people who need help." Amid these conflicting perspectives, some clarity emerges. The question—for Moyo and for Bono, for governments and for celebrities—is not really about whether to help. It's how to help better.



Photos of celebrities with poor African children don't 'help me raise a child who believes she can be a doctor or an engineer.'