**Dambisa Moyo: Cut Off Aid to Africa**

By Douglas McGray [Email](http://www.wired.com/services/feedback/letterstoeditor)09.21.09

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**Last year,** Dambisa Moyo was an unknown banker in the London office of Goldman Sachs. Then she wrote a book, *Dead Aid*, that blames foreign economic assistance for Africa's poverty and corruption (with passing shots at Bono and celebrity activism) and calls for an overhaul. As she began a tour of what seemed like hundreds of talk show appearances, defenders of aid started fighting back. Economist Jeffrey Sachs called her views "cruel" and noted acidly that aid (i.e., scholarships) sent [Moyo](http://www.dambisamoyo.com/) from Zambia to Harvard. Others, Moyo says, accused her of "killing African babies."

But Moyo's arguments are based on basic, even well-known, facts: Europe and the US have sent billions in aid to horrible regimes. Corrupt leaders have seen way more cash than needy citizens. Endless loans left the continent with crippling debt. And most of Africa is actually poorer today than it was a few decades ago, when aid dollars began to increase.

Furthermore, she doesn't condemn all aid, just that to governments. Nor has she proposed to end aid to Africa in five years, as many critics believe. Rather, Moyo wants the world to taper off financial assistance to African governments, as quickly as possible, and replace it with direct investment. She wants foreigners to see Africa as an opportunity not a basket case. And she points to the fact that a number of African economies have actually grown in the past year, even as the global economy contracted.

Moyo is young, African, great on television, and a natural pundit. This is what makes her so alarming to the development community. To them, she's providing cover for the world to neglect Africa. She sees it another way. "One of my publishers told me that I've given people license to question these issues without being labeled heartless or uncaring."