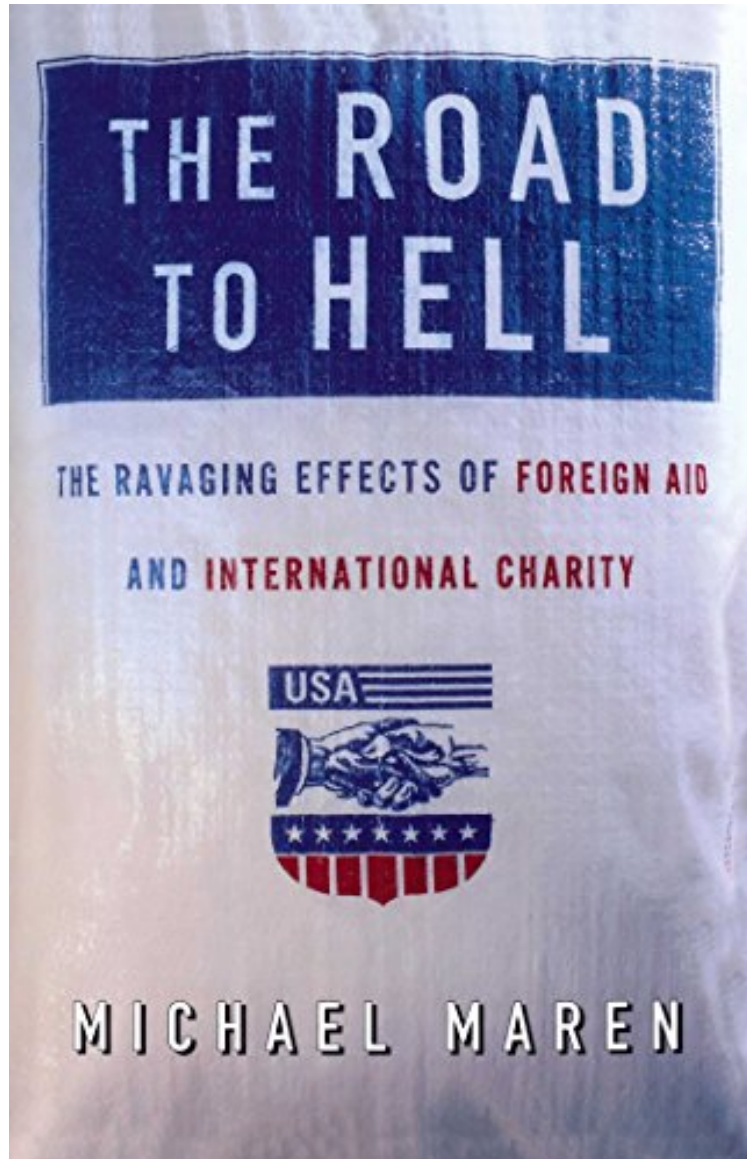


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The Road to Hell

Michael Maren

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Michael Maren : The Road to Hell before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Road to Hell:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very,very important book, but hard to get throughBy NYCshopperRelying on personal experiences and those of a few key informants, Michael Maren exposes the contradictions, challenges and hypocrisies that underly the global system of international aid and development. The central thesis of the book - that the aid system is not only broken, but corrupt and causing more harm than good - is known to many insiders, but not widely understood by the general public, who unwittingly support it - through tax

dollars and donations to "programs" that pay high salaries and offer cushy benefits to international staff and perpetuate misery among local "beneficiaries." International NGOs and the United Nations are presented as the worst offenders, operating in a way that serves to perpetuate their own existence without oversight or accountability to anyone. Unfortunately the narrative is choppy, sometimes hard to follow and deadened by far too many details and scattered pacing. STILL anyone considering going into the field of international development should read this, as should anyone who donates to international aid organizations. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A highly readable contribution to a debate tht too many people want to ignore By Sasha Alyson The author weaves together several themes in this book: the tragedies in Somalia; the role of international aid; and personal accounts. I couldn't put it down. For the past decade I've been doing literacy work in Laos, and while I don't agree with all of the author's conclusions, I think his moral indignation is justified. The West is too complacent about believing that "If we feel good and look good, we must be doing good." It will take people like Michael Maren to break through that complacency. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps a 3.5 rating but worth reading By Ma'rifah... I couldn't put this book down and when read in conjunction with I.M. Lewis's fourth edition book 'A Modern History of the Somalia' it becomes more interesting. And, as an observer of East African issues I found the former's book to be spot on--in some instances. It is also important to remember that he is presenting the worst case scenario and speaking from experience, I know that it goes on but the sad experiences listed in his book do not represent the whole. There are a lot of great NGO and others out there making a difference in people's lives and in many cases, the host nation governments appreciate the assistance and work side-by-side with the foreigners. In some places, the intent is to have the relief workers work themselves out of a job--and it has been successful. But, that shouldn't keep you from reading this book. In fact, given the current famine in East Africa (2011) it should be a must read for those who want to do good without causing harm.

A stunning personal narrative of best intentions gone awry, Michael Maren, at one time an aid worker and journalist in Somalia, writes of the failure of international charities. Michael Maren spent years in Africa, first as an aid worker, later as a journalist, where he witnessed at a harrowing series of wars, famines, and natural disasters. In this book, he claims that charities, such as CARE and Save the Children, are less concerned with relief than we think. Maren also attacks the United Nation's "humanitarian" missions are controlled by agribusinesses and infighting bureaucrats.

.com Before you mail another check to Save the Children or join the Peace Corps, read this book. Michael Maren shows that the international aid industry is a big business more concerned with winning its next big government contract than helping needy people. The problem isn't a lack of charity missions in the Third World, but that the best intentions of these idealists are often inadvertently destructive, thanks to a deadly combination of their naiveteacute; and the willingness of native elites to exploit them. Maren spent many years in Africa living this life. This is a splendid, literate, muckraking memoir of his experiences. From Publishers Weekly Despite the overstated title, this book is a forceful and disturbing portrait of Western intervention in Somalia, plus an investigation of underscrutinized aid foundations. Perhaps because of the book's ambition, Maren's narrative is disjointed, but readers will find it worth the effort. "[D]oing relief and development work in the context of oppression is counterproductive," he asserts, and his personal experience in Somalia, where, after a Peace Corps stint in Kenya, he returned as an aid worker and journalist, bears this out. While the Cold War fueled aid to Somalia, much of the aid was channeled by local power brokers to further their own ends. Indeed, while Somalia was once self-sufficient, it is now chronically dependent on imports of foreign food. Maren is equally scathing about prominent charities such as CARE and Save the Children, which he terms mercenaries more concerned with self-perpetuation than actual famine relief. CARE, he charges, once shipped food to armed fighters in Somalia, while Save the Children "projects don't work." His portrait of the aid biz emphasizes that it is driven mainly by grain-trading companies eager to unload excess capacity, even as their advertisements feature starving victims. Maren's brief report from Rwanda suggests that there, too, aid is falling into the wrong hands and thus financing a war. Maren maintains that journalists are too dependent on such aid organizations to properly evaluate them, and he proposes that an independent agency be established for that purpose. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This book is a contribution to the growing critique of international aid, similiar in force of argument to Ian Hancock's Lords of Poverty (Atlantic Monthly, 1992. pap.), but both more focused and more tightly argued. Maren targets the deceptions of nongovernmental organizations in soliciting public donations and very effectively contrasts disaster realities against aid agency publicity and their abilities to protect and assist communities. Maren was an aid worker and journalist in Somalia during the famine and civil war there in the early 1990s. His firsthand observations and analysis of numerous documents of that international crisis provide a powerful and provocative account of the flaws, faults, and failings of U.S. charities, such as Save the Children and the United Nations in providing assistance in times of crises. Highly recommended for both public and academic libraries. ?Bill Rau, Takoma Park, Md. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.