

World Bank Hires Washington Homeless to Fight Poverty at Home  
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Washington, Jan. 12 (Bloomberg) -- The World Bank, which lends \$15 billion a year from Argentina to Zambia to shape "a world free of poverty," has brought the effort to its front door, the scene of protests for the poor last year.

For the past three years the Washington-based development bank has employed homeless former drug addicts from the nearby Gospel Rescue Ministries to perform administrative jobs for \$11 an hour.

So far, the global lender's private-investment arm has brought in 24 men to file briefs, enter data and photocopy for nine-month stints in its legal counsel's office. And now World Bank officials want to extend the effort from their 7,000-employee headquarters to field offices from Moscow to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

"There's no problem of supply of the poor," said Jennifer Sullivan, the International Finance Corp.'s deputy counsel, who started the program after volunteering at the mission.

In the last year, World Bank officials have defended actions to improve conditions for the globe's most impoverished people and broadened efforts to listen to activists. Protest groups marched on the bank in April to complain that loan terms and projects such as dams are hurting the poor people they are supposed to help.

So the bank won unusual praise this week when the Washington charity and U.S. Representative Tony Hall, an Ohio Democrat, presented World Bank President James Wolfensohn with an award for the lender's work in hiring the homeless.

#### More Workers Sought

Gregory Padgett, a 53-year-old, self-described former crack cocaine addict, said he worked on one of the construction crews that helped build the IFC building in which he now works.

But did he know then what the World Bank did?

"I didn't have a clue," Padgett said.

Wolfensohn said the bank wants to expand the program in

Washington, because it also helps the lender staff hard-to-fill clerical jobs.

"We have our colleagues working with us not because of charity, but because they're doing a good job," Wolfensohn said.

"If you're doing a lousy job, we'll kick you out."

It's that choice of opportunity instead of charity that Wolfensohn said the bank is sending around the world. Even long-time critics of the bank's priorities welcome the employment program.

"It's always important to enhance your perspective by being involved in your own community," said Carol Welch, who monitors the bank at the environmental group Friends of the Earth.

Still, Welch said if the bank wants to give back to the community, it should pay taxes to the Washington city government. It is exempt under its charter from local and federal taxes.

--Mark Drajem in Washington (202) 624-1964 or  
mdrajem@bloomberg.net /jo/ead