

Citation for Barbara Parfitt

One of Barbara Parfitt's supporters for the Human Rights and Nursing Awards described her as 'a multi-linguist, networker, leader, and cutter of Gordian Knots. She is also delight to work with, a real encourager of new ideas and innovations, and an inspirational figure to several generations of nurses around the world.' This sums her up, but the details of her work and achievements are even more fascinating.

Barbara trained as a nurse and midwife and soon found herself working in Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Turkey as a nurse practitioner and midwife. In 1979 she started studying at the School of Tropical Medicine in Liverpool, and her PhD studies explored international primary health care, focusing on the impact of western values of nurses on primary health care in developing countries. As a leading member of the Nurses Christian Fellowship she takes a keen interest in the importance of spirituality within the healing process and the values that underpin the caring role.

She was Dean of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) for 15 years, Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for Nursing and Midwifery Education, Research and Practice at GCU, and the Secretary General for the Global WHOCCs for Nursing and Midwifery. At that time she also led a major nursing research and development programme in Tajikistan. In January 2007 she was awarded a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in the Queen's New Year's honours list, for services rendered to international health development, and in the same year she stepped aside as Dean to become the new Director of Global Health Development in GCU, continuing with projects in South Africa and Central Asia.

These positions gave Barbara the possibility to influence health care and nursing education far and wide: Tajikistan, Scotland, Norway, Spain, Romania and Moldova, South Africa and Central Asia. Everywhere her concern is to promote empowerment for women, women's rights and the health care rights of people who are sick, poor, or dying. She has shown a deep concern for nurses to become aware of their vital role, not only as health professionals with a recognized status within their own nations, but also as actors on the national and international stage to advocate and institute programmes for the betterment of the health of their local and national communities.

Barbara's current work and concern is in Bangladesh. There she has established the Grameen Caledonian College of Nursing, in collaboration with the Grameen Health Care Trust and Glasgow Caledonian University, to empower young women through nursing education as leaders, decision makers and change agents, and to break the cycle of poverty resulting from early marriage, early pregnancy and early death. Students are educated to an international level through the provision of the highest quality education and research. The lack of trained health professionals in Bangladesh is seriously hindering health development. The College is now training 50 nurses per year and plans to increase total student numbers to 500 over the next five years, offering Diploma, BSc and Masters programmes.