

Queen Margaret University at the forefront of health research

An internationally renowned health economist at Queen Margaret University (QMU) in Edinburgh is to have a leading role in a £6 million international research programme into rebuilding health systems in countries recovering from conflict. Professor Barbara McPake, director of the Institute for International Health and Development (IIHD) at QMU, will co-direct research for the programme which will draw on a global range of expertise from affiliated institutions.

The UK government funded programme aims to provide valuable new knowledge from countries that have recovered from conflict situations, such as Sierra Leone and Cambodia, which will help in developing new health systems in countries in the immediate aftermath of political and social conflict.

QMU will directly receive £1 million of the £6 million grant as part of a consortium comprising Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine; Makerere University, Uganda; College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, Sierra Leone; Biomedical Research and Training Institute, Zimbabwe and the Cambodia Development Resource Institute.

Commenting on the research funding award Professor McPake said:-“We are delighted to have received this funding from DFID. It will be a privilege to work with such a skilled team of professionals from all over the world. There are particular opportunities in post-conflict fragile states for reshaping health systems to give poor people better access to services and reduce the burden of health related expenditure and associated impoverishment. This is important research that could contribute to global security and peace building, by

strengthening the population's stake in peace, and bridging communities.”

Professor Petra Wend, QMU Principal, said; “As an institution our focus is on work that is relevant to the communities we serve. This award reflects that ethos, our international standing and our interdisciplinary vision.”

The research programme will focus on health financing, human resources and their interaction. It aims to build knowledge about the implications for the poorest households of alternative ways of re-establishing financial support for the public system including new aid institutions, new budgeting strategies and targeted funding for priority programmes. In human resources it will focus on management innovations, opportunities for reallocating roles among health professionals in a rebuilding health system and the prospects for both to contribute to improved access to effective services for those most easily excluded.