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Determined to help, she resigned in September from her job as a researcher at London Metropolitan University. One month later she flew to Indonesia to work as a delegate for the Red Cross in a programme to construct houses and help people rebuild their lives.

She says: "I was awestruck by the courage of the Indonesian people. I wanted to be part of the helping process."

As well as taking the chance that she could be giving up a promising career, Ashika (far right) accepted a £9,000 pay cut to take up a post in Banda Aceh, one of the worst-hit towns in Indonesia.

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## OFF TO REBUILD HOUSES AND SHATTERED LIVES



grieving locals. Ashika says: "Before I left, I was scared and anxious, not only about what I was going to do but also about what I was leaving behind."

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"The conditions in the field are difficult because so much of the infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed. We sleep in tents and share loos. The water is from a well and is often dirty."

But Ashika has never regretted her decision to volunteer.

She says: "Despite what they have been through the Acehnese people are very friendly and, unlike Londoners, pass the time of day with you."

● If you want to donate to the Red Cross effort call 0870 170 9200 or visit [www.redcross.org.uk/donate](http://www.redcross.org.uk/donate).

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**PUBLISHED December 27<sup>th</sup> 2005, The Sun Newspaper.**