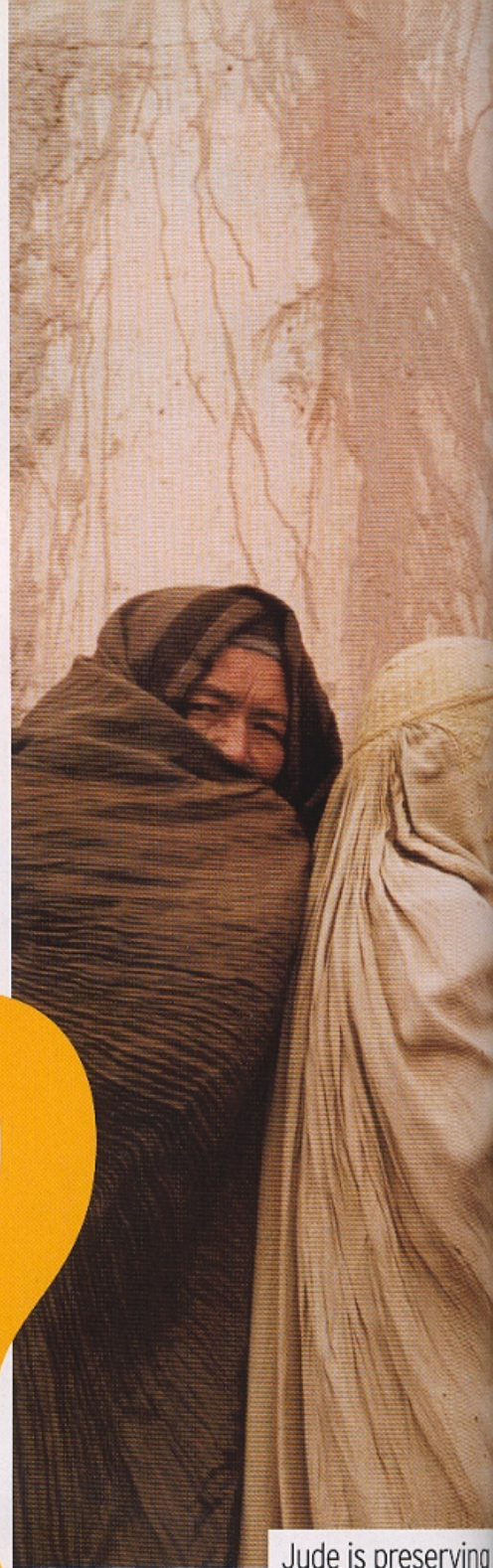


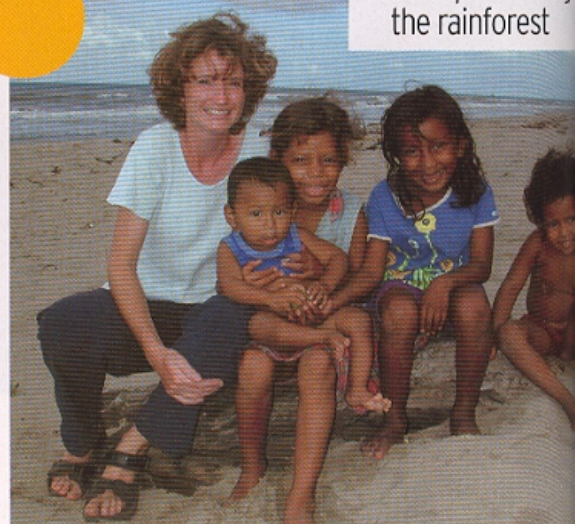
DO YOU want to change THE world?

THESE WOMEN SHOW YOU HOW

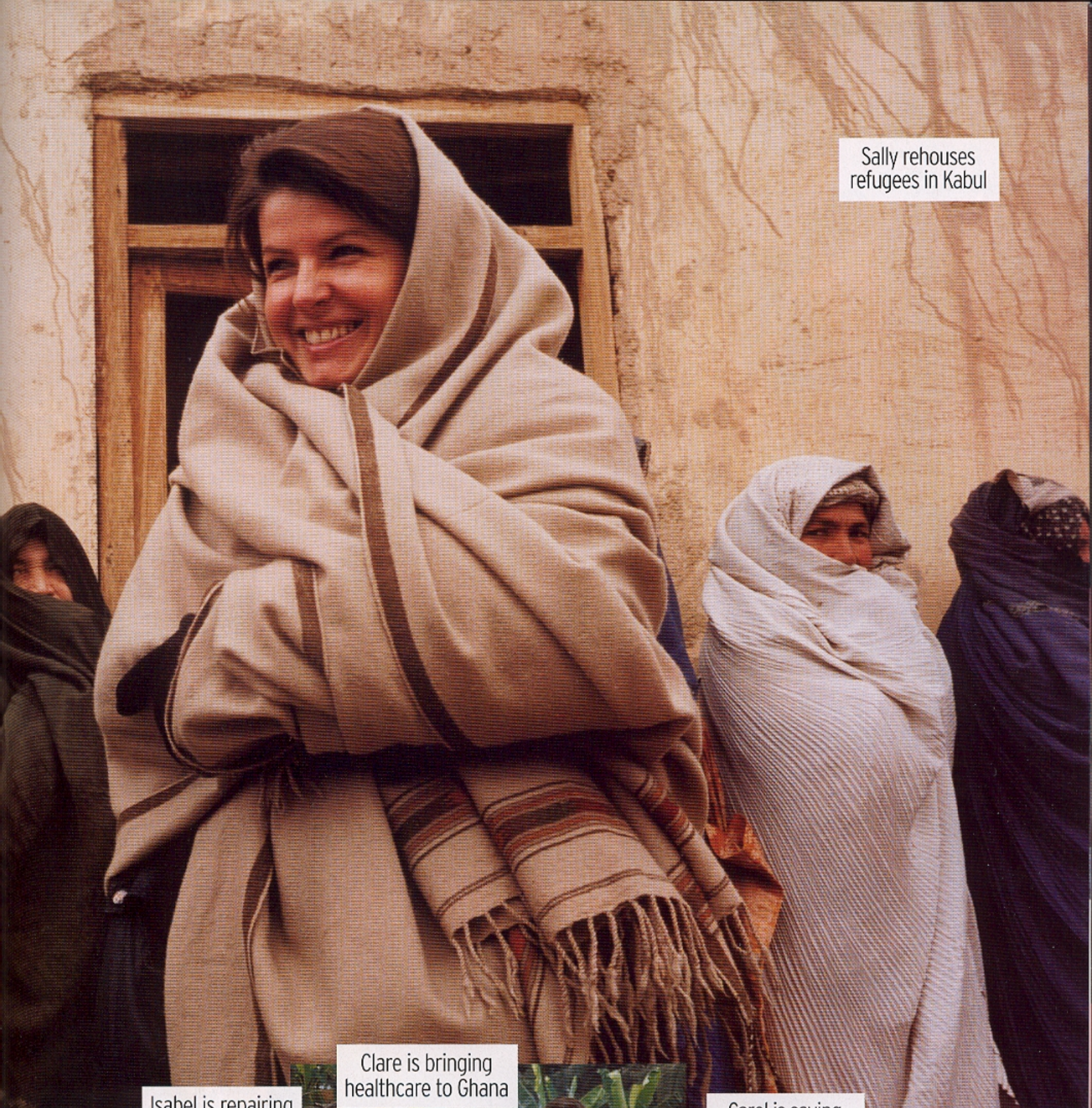
Ever get fed up with commuting, meaningless paperwork and office politics? Jane Hughes talks to five career women who gave it all up to discover the real meaning of job satisfaction



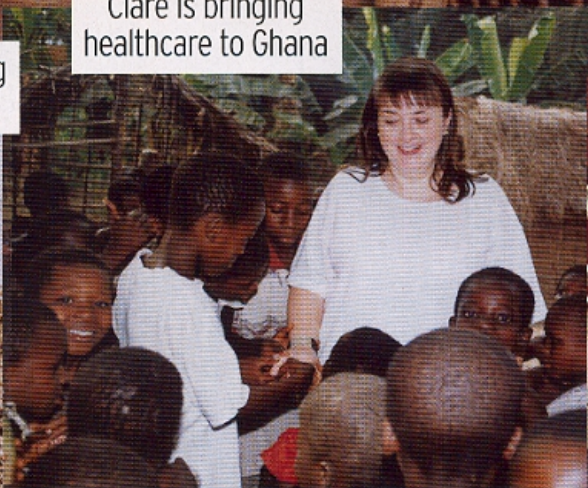
Jude is preserving the rainforest



Sally rehuses refugees in Kabul



Clare is bringing healthcare to Ghana



Isabel is repairing the eco chain



Carol is saving Kosovan orphans



Sally rehouses refugees in Kabul

Sally Austin, 35, from Hampshire.

Job: assistant country director for CARE Afghanistan, in Kabul. CARE is helping rebuild houses, distribute food and clean water and provide teacher-training and books to schools.

Salary: £36,000.

Route to job: 'After eight years working with CARE in London, I knew I couldn't spend my life on the Tube. I didn't have a house to worry about when I got this job, but sold my half share of a sailing boat.'

Average day: 'My job is to support our 550 local employees and get new projects off the ground. Because of fighting in some areas, I can't travel out to many of our projects. In Kabul, I'm setting up centres for war widows, encouraging them to make clothes and start kitchen gardens. We've also started teacher-training for women who are now able to work again.'

Best moment: 'Last winter, I had a great time on a sledging picnic with two of my staff.'

Worst moment: 'After September 11, I was evacuated to Pakistan. I was terrified for our staff when the bombing of Kabul started. It was a huge relief to get back.'

What do you eat? 'Lunch is naan and beans, but I crave bacon sandwiches, and have Marmite on naan for breakfast. You can get things like bran flakes and chocolate at one very expensive supermarket, but retail therapy is limited to carpets.'

What do you like most? 'The beauty and complexity of Afghanistan fascinates me.'

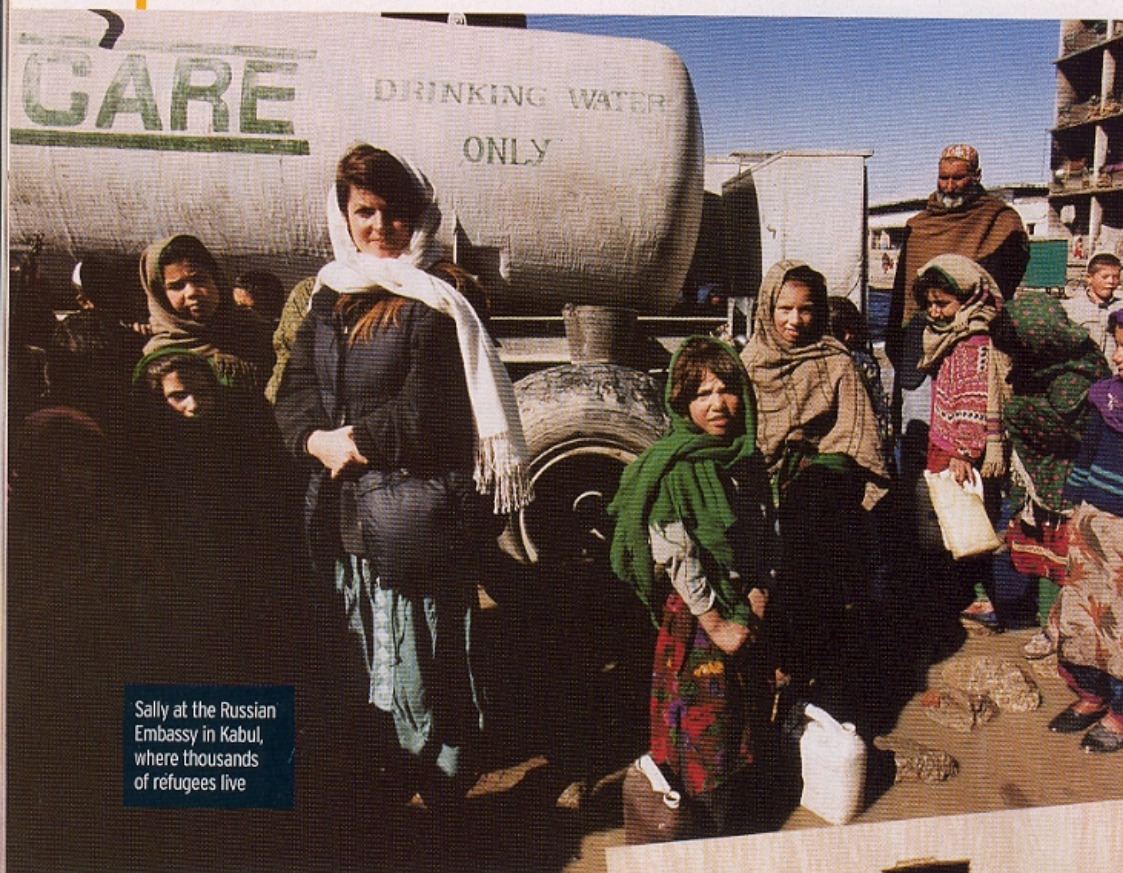
Is there a downside? 'Life is tough. I was our first female director in Afghanistan, and as an expatriate woman, I was treated as a "third gender". I was so lonely at first - I missed not being able to go for a beer. I get

home every four to five months.'

Weirdest thing about the lifestyle? 'I work seven days a week and, with a 9pm curfew, there's not much opportunity to socialise. Most expats meet at the UN club, though it only has old-stock whisky.'

What next? 'I'll be here for at least another few months. After that, I hope to go back overseas.'

How you can help: CARE needs £3 million to fund projects in Afghanistan. For information, call 0845-450 1228, or log on to www.careinternational.org.uk.



Sally at the Russian Embassy in Kabul, where thousands of refugees live



Sally with some of the war widows in Kabul, and, below, CARE's cash for work project where women sew school uniforms. They earn \$1 per uniform and were recently given an order for 8,000



From top: Sally and fellow workers prepare to check war widows' ID cards at one of the centres; at the CARE office in Kabul; and at home with a friend



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE BROOKS/NETWORK

Jude with Miskito Indian children near her home in Honduras



Jude is preserving the rainforest

Jude Collins, 30, from Cumbria.

Job: environmental advisor for Tearfund in the Rio Plátano Reserve, Honduras. She job-shares with her husband, Steve, a forester, helping to preserve the rainforest.

Salary: £14,500 (joint with Steve).

Route to job: 'I'm a farming consultant and studied tropical agriculture. Steve and I supported Tearfund and applied for any jobs abroad that came up with them. Before we started, we took a Spanish course in Guatemala.'

Average day: 'My day starts around 6am, before the heat sets in. I work with a community organisation to develop eco-tourism. I've helped to reforest eroded areas, and also support a committee who rebury turtle eggs to protect them from poachers.'

Best moment: 'My first glimpse of the village, among the palm trees bordering a lagoon, took my breath away.'

Worst moment: 'Getting suspected malaria. My head felt like it was going to explode. It takes a week to get a test, so I took my medicine just in case and woke up fine, thank goodness.'

What do you eat? 'A couple of local families sell rice, beans and spaghetti, and we get chocolate from town every few weeks. Breakfast is cornflakes and powdered milk and we eat lots of eggs, fish and vegetables. If someone kills a cow, we'll maybe get some meat.'

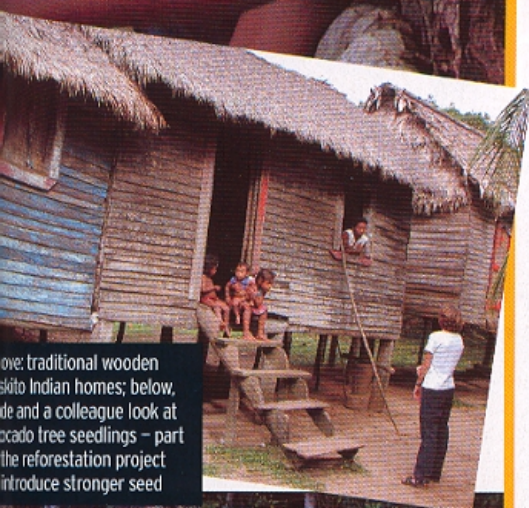
What do you like most? 'I love this simple existence – you can walk for miles along empty beaches. The local people are so welcoming and I've made some wonderful friends.'

Is there a downside? 'Sometimes, it's hard being cut off from people at home, but we recently had a holiday with our friends and family in Florida.'

Weirdest thing about the lifestyle? 'I never imagined I would be living in a house on stilts, two hours by canoe from the nearest town. Our house has a tin roof, so when it rains, you can't hear yourself speak. To my horror, I discovered a big lump of white ants' eggs in a cupboard when we arrived, so now we keep everything spotless.'

What next? 'We'll be here for five years.'

How you can help: Tearfund needs £250,000 a year for its work at Rio Plátano. To make a donation, or for more information, call 0845-355 8355, or log on to www.tearfund.org. ▷



above: traditional wooden Miskito Indian homes; below: Jude and a colleague look at cocado tree seedlings – part of the reforestation project to introduce stronger seed





Right: Isabel makes notes on shell types endemic to Sibuyan for her project. Above: with friends Edna and 'Uncle Anding', who help her to identify the shells

Isabel is repairing the eco-chain

Isabel Isherwood, 27, from Yorkshire.

Job: coastal resource manager for VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) on Sibuyan, a remote island in The Philippines, with her husband, Jake.

Salary: annual allowance of £1,680.

Route to job: 'I've worked on conservation projects around the world. Last year, I did an MSc in tropical coastal management, then Jake and I applied to VSO together. We had five weeks' training in the local language.'

Average day: 'I've set up ecology camps for primary schools. We play food web games to show what is dependent on what – the children love it. The biggest problem is dynamite fishing, where fishermen throw homemade bombs into coral reefs, which kill everything in sight. I've started running workshops for fishermen – it's vital for them to realise that looking after resources now will make things easier in the future.'

Highlights: 'I'm always very nervous before a workshop, but when the penny drops, I come out on an absolute high.'

Difficulties: 'Our employer – the Mubayah

Foundation – is a loose grouping of community representatives, and at first it was quite stressful trying to work out what we could do without offending anyone.'

What do you eat? 'We bake bread for breakfast, and eat a lot of fish, rice and green vegetables. We go to the market every day, where you can get imported carrots, cauliflower and cake. The local alcohol is made from coconut palms.'

What do you like most? 'I'm happiest in wild, natural places, so I love Sibuyan.'

Is there a downside? 'It's hard not being able to pour my heart out to friends – I have to go to Manila, the capital, just to phone or e-mail.'

Weirdest thing about lifestyle? 'Our house is quiet and private and has intermittent running water and electricity. There was talk of 24-hour electricity, so we got excited and bought a fridge. But the generator blew up, so our fridge is now stuck in the corner. It's been easy to make friends – there's lots of dancing and drinking at fiestas.'

What next? 'We're here for at least another year but want to stay longer. I've never been happier.'

How you can help: VSO needs a variety of professionals to work worldwide – call 020-8780 7500 or visit www.vso.org.uk. ▷



From top: buying fish for dinner at the local market; walking home with friends; at home with husband Jake, who is also a volunteer



Clare is bringing healthcare to Ghana

Clare Collins, 35, from London.

Job: sponsorship manager for Plan International in Accra, Ghana. Plan is working with families, using money raised through child sponsorship, to set up health, education and local credit schemes.

Salary: £25-30,000.

Route to job: 'Eight years ago, I gave up my management consultant job and joined Plan to co-ordinate sponsorship from the UK. I soon got itchy feet and waited a long time for the right overseas job to come up.'

Average day: 'I'm responsible for building relationships between sponsors and children. Many people are subsistence farmers living

in mud huts, and their children are thrilled that someone in the UK wants to write to them. We use drama and puppetry to get across basic health

messages, like the importance of washing hands, and have set up children's clubs in schools.'

Highlights: 'I'm always moved by the enthusiasm of the local women – they greet us with such warmth.'

What do you eat? 'I go to my local restaurant to have *banku*, a fermented maize and okra stew. It's eaten with fingers, so things get very messy.'

What do you like most? 'I felt at home from the start, because the Ghanaians are so friendly and hospitable. I've literally been to four weddings and a funeral – all spectacular events. The wedding sermon is very entertaining, with the minister telling the bride how to keep her man happy.'

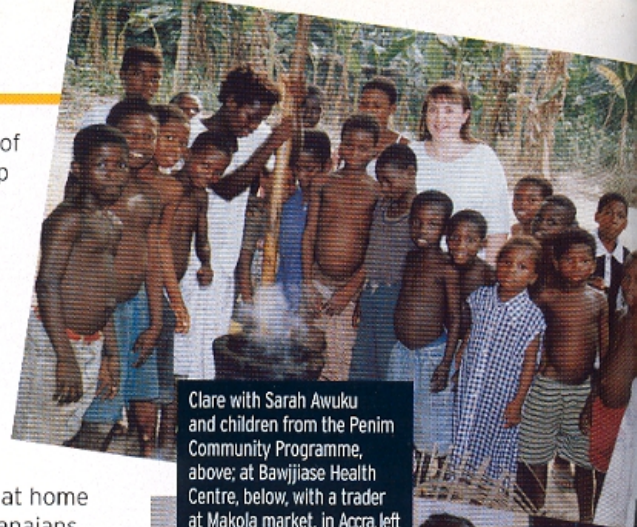
Is there a downside? 'The only downside is the high crime rate.'

Weirdest thing about the lifestyle?

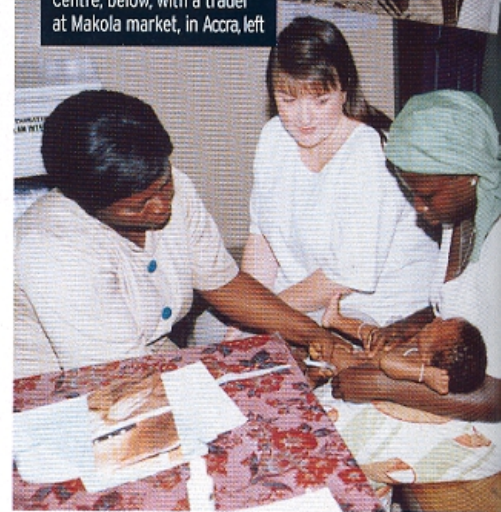
'My family love hearing about my adventures in my Renault 5 – avoiding potholes, pedestrians and taxi drivers.'

What next? 'I'm on a two-year contract but I'm happy to stay longer.'

How you can help: Sponsoring a child in Ghana costs £12 a month. Call 020-7482 9777, or visit www.plan-international.org.uk.



Clare with Sarah Awuku and children from the Penim Community Programme, above; at Bawjiase Health Centre, below, with a trader at Makola market, in Accra, left



Carol is saving orphans in Kosovo

Carol Toms, 29, from North Yorkshire.

Job: programme manager for Save the Children in Pristina, Kosovo. There are more than 1,000 orphaned or abandoned children in Kosovo. Save the Children is training foster-care families and providing teachers and equipment for nursery schools in the area.

Salary: £22,000.

Route to job: 'After joining Save the Children in Leeds, I was drawn – as a former teacher – to the plight of children in the Balkans.'

Average day: 'We are training our Albanian staff in Pristina and two Serb workers in the enclave of Mitrovica North to take over the programme. It's too dangerous for Serbs to travel out of the enclaves, so I go to Mitrovica to deliver supplies to the schools. The hours are long so I'm usually in bed by 9.30pm.'

Highlights: 'The only activity on winter weekends is skiing. A very basic Serb resort re-opened recently. The chairlift looks like a garden chair, the runs are unmarked and the

Serbs ski like they drive – speeding and ignoring everyone else.'

Worst moment: 'There are constant checkpoints armed by peacekeeping troops – I've been stopped six times in one day.'

What do you eat? 'Every nine weeks, I go home for an intensive week of fresh veg and fruit. I eat mostly snack food in Pristina, because cold storage is unreliable and supermarket supplies are erratic. And the vegetables taste of pesticides.'

What do you like most? 'Every day is a chance to make a real difference to children who have experienced extreme hardship.'

Is there a downside? 'I really miss pre-packaged mini-carrots!'

Weirdest thing about lifestyle? 'No one warned me Pristina would be quite so dirty and smelly. I was shocked at the mountains of litter infested by rats. My bathroom is full of buckets in case the water is cut off, and during power cuts, I cook by candlelight.'

What next? 'My contract ends in October but I'm hoping it will be extended as I'm very happy. I'm learning Albanian and I love Kosovan culture.'

How you can help: To donate to Save the Children's work in south-east Europe, call 020-7701 8916, or see www.beatpoverty.org or www.savethechildren.org.uk. ■



Top: Carol talks to staff and children at a school project; with friends on a weekend skiing trip, above; the view from her flat in Pristina, right

