



1. Look at this interview with an Australian soldier working with the United Nations in East Timor, and decide:

- what qualities she shows
- her attitude to the Army
- her attitude to her role in East Timor.

2. Do you think she should be proud of what she is doing?



Hi. I'm Lainie Jenkins, I'm 26, originally from North Queensland – and an old student of St Patrick's College, Mackay.

I started my working life in the hospitality industry. I became engaged to a soldier, and decided to join as well. It's the best thing I ever did!

So now I'm a soldier in the Australian Army, and came here as part of the InterFET force, but I'm actually serving now as part of the United Nations force – which is why I wear the blue beret rather than the usual jungle hat or slouch hat.

My job is as an Operations Mover at the Australian military base in Dili – which means that I help co-ordinate the coming and going of people from Australia and other countries to East Timor.

A normal day sees me up at six, down to meet the first helicopter shuttle, make sure that people get to the right place they are going to, and then back to the office to keep a record of it all. This happens several times during the day.

I've had plenty of helicopter trips to all parts of East Timor. I've really been shocked to see the extent of the devastation of the place. It looks like almost every house has been wrecked and burnt, with just the shell surviving. This is in small villages as well as the larger towns. I really can't understand why people have been so destructive – it just seems so vicious and unnecessary.

Anyway, the local people are slowly repairing and re-building their houses. It's going to be a long and really hard job, but their optimism and attitude are fantastic. They are just really beautiful people, especially the women and kids, and so happy. I don't know where they get that great spirit from. I have to say that they are really appreciative of what we are doing, and really respond well to the Australians – it makes me proud to be part of something so welcome and so constructive. It's clear that without us to protect people, there would still be some nasty possibilities from the militia and the integrationists.

The security is good at the moment – InterFET have really forced the militia away. We always walk around in pairs, but that's the same if you were in Sydney or wherever, just good sense.

Being part of the UN force, I go around unarmed. I think that creates a bit of confidence in people too – if I don't need a weapon, then things are getting safer. When InterFET goes and the UN force becomes responsible for security, then I will carry a weapon.

I'll be here for 6–9 months. Just as long as I get home in August – because that's when we are getting married. We've already put the wedding off once because of our posting here, so I want to make sure it happens this time!

I have to say that being in the Army is great. The old days when women were not quite accepted have gone. We are all accepted as equal, as long as we can all do our job. I trained in a mixed platoon, so you really develop a camaraderie as part of a group – whether you are a guy or a girl.

So life is pretty good – I love the work, I love being part of the service, and I especially love being proud of the good that we are doing here. It's a job with real purpose and meaning.

Interview February 2000

3. Women now carry out most tasks in the Australian Defence Force, but there are still some front line tasks which they do not carry out. Debate the idea: That gender equality should not extend to war.