

PILLARS Newsletter January 2004

I would like to start this New Year by saying thank you to all of you who have given and continue to give so generously of your time and energy to producing and using PILLARS guides with your communities.

In 2003 I had the wonderful opportunity of travelling to Myanmar, Ethiopia and Brazil, where Tearfund is currently piloting the PILLARS training process, designed to equip people to translate, write and use PILLARS guides in their local languages. I was continually struck by the vision, faith and commitment of those co-ordinating, facilitating and participating in the training, which has presented many new challenges to those involved. I was also struck by the extraordinary things that can be achieved when God is with us and when we work together, putting our gifts, knowledge and selves at the service of others.

PILLARS is all about working together, be it a group of development workers coming together to translate or write a new guide in their mother tongue, or a women's group or a farmers' group meeting together to read, discuss and apply ideas from a PILLARS guide to their specific situation. As a group, we can encourage each other, challenge each other, learn from each other and build something new together: a new vision that may lead to improvements in the way we address issues such as health, work or gender, and new relationships that may enable us to share our vision and our lives with the wider community. It is my prayer for 2004 that the guides that you are producing and using will help you serve your

communities by deepening their understanding of the different challenges they face and their awareness of the different responses that could be made, and by building their confidence and trust in one another and in God. I hope that this newsletter will inspire you with ideas and energy that will be an encouragement to you in this work.

PILLARS Workshops

In Myanmar, two weeks of training were held in autumn 2003, to conclude the formal PILLARS process. The training brought together representatives of 11 different language groups who have translated and written new guides, alongside development staff who will play a key role in determining how the guides will be integrated into the organisation's existing development activities, as an awareness raising and capacity building tool.

A new guide was written on drugs trafficking and use, which is a major cause of poverty and social disintegration in the border regions. Training was given in facilitation skills and techniques that can be used by those leading discussions from the PILLARS guides to encourage group members to participate, and in the distribution, promotion, marketing and sale of the guides. A committee was established to co-ordinate these activities at national level, and sub-committees have already been established in each language group to manage the work at the regional level. Although this therefore marked the end of the formal training, the participants and partner staff are keen that the

production and use of guides should be sustained. *Building the capacity of local groups* has been printed in Burmese, and different churches and NGOs have begun to use this in their spiritual and development ministries. The main challenges that lie ahead are the editing and printing of the existing guides and gaining ownership of the guides and process at community level.

In Ethiopia, a baseline survey was conducted in spring 2003, to gain a deeper understanding of the information needs and priorities of the target audience. The second and third workshops subsequently took place, and two more guides were produced in the Wolaitigna language – a translation of *Building the capacity of local groups* and a new guide on *Harmful Traditional Practices*. This sought to stimulate critical debate of practices that mainly affect the health and well being of women and children – practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, Early Marriage, abduction. The guide aimed to generate open discussion of the rationale for and the consequences of such practices through a presentation of factual information and a series of questions and Bible studies that allowed for further reflection. It was agreed that the discussion based approach on which PILLARS is modelled is ideal for addressing such sensitive issues in a way that is non-threatening. A committee was then established to manage the distribution and sale of the existing guides, to organise training for members of local churches in using the guides and to plan for further translation and writing workshops, so that the production of guides is sustained. The main challenges ahead include ensuring the financial sustainability of the work and gaining ownership of the guides.

One of the workshop participants commented: "For the first time in my life, I discovered that even timid persons like me could learn to translate and even write a material". Another stated: "I am now confident that even our language has a value and I can be proud of this."

Elsewhere in Ethiopia, another Tearfund partner intends to translate the guides into Amharic and eventually into a series of local languages. ZOA Refugee Care are also about to take members of two or three different language groups through a PILLARS training process, with a view to using the guides within the existing context of the refugee camps, and with their communities when the refugees return to Southern Sudan.

In Brazil, a first PILLARS workshop took place in June 2003, bringing together Portuguese speakers from the north and north east of the country, speakers of indigenous languages, working with various people groups in or around the Amazon and individuals working with the deaf community. The training focused on how the guides can be used to strengthen the skills base, knowledge and confidence of a group, and how they can be adapted to different contexts.



Above: making PILLARS sustainable

A group of the trainees has subsequently adapted an existing guide, *Healthy Eating*, to the Brazilian context, working alongside a local artist. Several indigenous groups are currently working with language experts to translate a guide in advance of another workshop in the spring, during which their translations will be reviewed by a wider membership of their language group. Further training on facilitation skills will also be given.

Elsewhere in the world...

In **Thailand**, *Building the capacity of local groups* has been printed in Thai, and an organisation working with tribal people in the border areas is exploring the possibility of using the guides that have been produced by common language groups in Myanmar. *Building the capacity of local groups* and *Credit and loans for small business* were translated into Mandarin by one of our UK staff members in advance of a conference for NGOs and mission organisations based in the **China**. In **Chad**, plans are afoot to embark on a PILLARS process, with the aim of using the translated guides as a post-literacy resource.

Evaluation of PILLARS

An external evaluation of PILLARS will be conducted in the spring of this year. The purpose of this is to determine the extent which the training we have offered is successfully equipping participants to use, translate and write PILLARS guides, and the extent to which the guides themselves are having a positive impact on those using them. It is hoped that this will enable Tearfund to improve both the guides and the way it is supporting organisations through the process.

Please do send any comments you may have about the guides themselves or the challenges or opportunities that you have been presented with as you have used or translated them. Your feedback is incredibly useful and valuable to us.

PILLARS guides

The following guides are currently available in English, with most available in French, Spanish and Portuguese:

- *Building The Capacity Of Local Groups*
- *Improving Food Security*
- *Agro forestry*
- *Credit and Loans for Small Businesses*
- *Preparing For Disasters*
- *Mobilising the community*
- *Healthy Eating*

All of the above guides are also available on CD ROM, with the exception of *Mobilising the community* and *Healthy Eating*.

In February 2004 *Mobilising the Church* will be available in print. This guide is written specifically for use within churches, and is designed to challenge, excite and equip all church members to widen their vision. It contains material on the role of the church, church leadership, Bible study groups, working with the community and developing and maintaining the vision of the church. Each page includes Bible study material to use as part of the discussion questions. One Tearfund partner who field tested the guide gave the following feedback: "I found out that the guide was very useful not only in the church but also in community Development. With the first PILLARS guide, *Mobilising the Community*, now we're OK. We are

now able to cover a whole being. “A total man.””

A Community response to HIV and AIDS will be published in the autumn. This guide will seek to share best practice in prevention and care, drawing on the experience of our partners and that of other agencies.

Please contact us for more information about translations into other national or local languages at the address found below.

PILLARS training materials:

The *PILLARS Workbook* is written for organisations wishing to facilitate a training process that equips participants to use, translate and write PILLARS guides in their local languages. It contains a suggested outline for each workshop and associated methodology and materials needed.

New: the *Facilitation Skills Workbook for using PILLARS guides* is designed to equip people to use the PILLARS guides with local groups, where guides already exist in the target language. The potential of the guides to increase the skills and knowledge of group members and to build their confidence and self-esteem primarily depends on the way in which they are used. Experience of facilitating group discussion and an awareness of different techniques that encourage people to participate is crucial for those leading the discussions if they are to see this kind of positive impact on the groups using the guides. The *Workbook* forms the basis of a 3-5 day workshop, or can be used as a reference for ideas on facilitation and participatory techniques.

Should you wish to order any of the above resources, please contact us at the address below. Please do also send any learning points or comments you may have, and any news that you may wish to share in a subsequent newsletter.

You can find more information about PILLARS on our website, www.tilz.info

This comes with our love and prayers, and best wishes for this New Year.

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