

PILLARS newsletter September 2004

PILLARS - around the world in 230 days..

Since the last PILLARS newsletter was circulated in January, many exciting developments have taken place in different countries and languages across the world...

In Brazil, two Portuguese PILLARS guides have been adapted to the Brazilian context by a group of christian development agencies, and printed and distributed by a local publishing house, Ultimato. Six indigenous language groups are now translating guides into their mother tongue, and PILLARS will be presented to CONPLEI, a national network of indigenous leaders, in early September, so that the vision can be shared with other language groups. The translation process has proved to be enormously empowering and affirming for people groups who have traditionally been marginalized and without a voice on issues directly affecting their own development.

When asked what they had learnt during the recent translation workshop, responses included:

- 'The need to strengthen each other and feel valued'
- 'Using our own culture and resources...to build the capacity of my own people'
- 'I am sad to say that although we have many Indian men and women who have the capacity to translate, they are ashamed to be Indians. When they go to learn they do it only to develop themselves as individuals. I want to put into practice what God has told me to do. We need to find a way to be proud to be Indian - to work to help each other to develop our own identity and in this way to glorify God.'
- 'I want to live out what I have learned and reflect the value of being an Indian'



The third PILLARS workshop in Brazil

In the north east of Brazil, the Igreja Batista Aliança has been using the PILLARS guides with various church groups: 'We have now completed the training based on *Building the capacity of local groups* in two of our local congregations with quite a deal of acceptance and success. In both we have also put the project research lessons into practice and have now two projects to be planned as a result...In Itaitinga the group have decided to restart a craft project. The Footsteps no 35 (micro-enterprise) will be really helpful, and I have already passed on a copy to the leader of the congregation. He will probably also be using *Credit and loans for small businesses*, which he had already been looking at... Here in the mother church we will be using *Mobilising the Church* in the Adult Sunday School as the text book for a discipleship course in holistic mission.'

In Ethiopia, ZOA Refugee Care has hosted three workshops for the Mabban language group, who are currently displaced from their home in Southern Sudan, and living in Sherkole camp in south west Ethiopia. According to the local consultant who facilitated the training, the production of PILLARS guides in their mother tongue 'was a landmark in the history of the Mabban people'. PILLARS represented 'practical advocacy work for a community forgotten by the rest of the world and people displaced from their original domicile,

deprived of their natural rights to peace and undisturbed community life... The Mabbans were facing the risk of losing their identity and their rights to acquire knowledge ..PILLARS has gone some way to restoring the rights of these people to receive information and participate in the development of their communities so that the present and future Mabban ...could have a better future’.

In Myanmar, the Council of Churches and development agency World Concern have distributed the Burmese translation of *Building the capacity of local groups* to their health and community workers, for use in related projects. The Baptist Convention is planning facilitation skills training for PILLARS group facilitators, as well as an in-depth consultation with staff of its regional development departments and peer agencies to develop a strategy for integrating the guides into existing development aims and activities.

In Nigeria, 3,000 copies of *Building the capacity of local groups* and *Improving food security* have been printed in the Yoruba language. The third guide on income-generating activities is in the process. A Regional Language Team is in place to promote, market, and sustain the project. According to Francis Ademola, responsible for co-ordinating CRUDAN’s PILLARS work: ‘..a meeting of the Regional Language Team was held to review the progress so far. A strategy to overcome the challenge faced in the marketing of the guides was suggested; that a workshop be held to train not just the Regional Language Team members, but also field workers of selected Christian NGOs working in the language area on facilitation skills for using PILLARS Guides. Hitherto, Regional Language Team members involved in the marketing of the guides have only been "introducing" the guides to communities and organisations working with grassroots populations. It is only through the use of the guides during a meeting that we believe (we) can stimulate their interest in using them...’



In Burkina Faso, a promotional event took place to mark the publication of three PILLARS guides in the Mooré language. The event was attended by peer agencies interested in using PILLARS to enhance the capacity building or educational components of their community development work. It was reported in the local press and on the internet. Joanna Ilboudo, responsible for co-ordinating the work with Tearfund partner Editions Contact, says the guides are being used with women in rural areas, and sent this update on how they were received at a regional women’s conference held in August: ‘..they were very interested in receiving material on *Credits and loans for small businesses*, (and) the AIDS guide which is only in Mooré ... women in other countries in francophone Africa are interested in the PILLARS guides. I believe the AIDS guide in Dioula may be used by people in Mali, once it is finished...’

And beyond, PILLARS guides have also been translated into Kiswahili and Hindi, and during the course of the next few months, our new guide on HIV and AIDS will be translated into Amharic, Hausa and Mandarin Chinese, amongst other languages.

All language translations will shortly be listed on Tearfund’s learning website, www.tilz.info, along with contact details for those who wish to order copies directly. Please do write to us if you have translated any PILLARS guides into other languages. We would be happy to publicise your materials.

PILLARS – what have we learnt so far?

From March to July, a team of external consultants undertook the task of evaluating the relevance, sustainability and impact of the PILLARS process, focusing on the work of our partners in Myanmar, Ethiopia and Brazil. This entailed extensive interviews, desk-based research and field visits, during which the consultants were able to meet with those who had participated in the training workshops and to see the guides in use.

The evaluation affirmed the relevance of the guides in each of the three pilot countries, given the dearth of simple, practical discussion-based information in the mother tongue. Although it was too early to determine the impact of the guides on user groups, it highlighted the positive impact on cultural self-esteem through the value placed on indigenous languages and culture. The final report stated that 'Potentially, PILLARS can offer the following: a chance to learn at grassroots level, raising levels of literacy, access to new ways of learning and new information, pride and confidence in local languages and cultures. The potential impact on the development work of the church could include a re-appraisal of how they perceive and engage in integral mission, as well providing a further tool for outreach to the wider community. At country level PILLARS can contribute to the status and use of minority languages and can give the church an enhanced role in development as PILLARS is used beyond the confines of Christian circles'.

The evaluation recommended that organisations wishing to use PILLARS guides first undertake a process of strategic planning. Target groups and group facilitators should be identified before any guides are produced and their particular information needs taken into account when deciding which guide to introduce to a particular community group. Development agencies who are already working with local communities can ensure that PILLARS is integrated into their wider aims and work, by identifying guides that will support other development

projects they are implementing. For example, they could use *Credit and loans for small businesses* with credit groups that have been established as part of an income generation project.

The evaluation also recommended extensive training in facilitation skills for all those leading group discussions using the PILLARS guides. Once guides are available in the relevant language, we do not want them simply to sit on someone's shelf! Tearfund has therefore revised its facilitation skills training manual. This can either be used as the basis of a five-day workshop, or as training material which can be integrated into other training activities. It seeks to equip participants with basic facilitation skills and tools that will help them use the PILLARS guides in such a way that all members of a group are encouraged to participate and the knowledge, skills and confidence of the group is strengthened. This training resource will be available in English in September and at the end of the year in French, Spanish and Portuguese. We also hope to have it translated into other national and local languages.

Thank you to all of you who participated in this evaluation, in any way. It was a very valuable learning process for Tearfund. If you would like to know more about the findings and recommendations, please contact me at the address below.

PILLARS – where do go from here?

The immediate priority for Tearfund is to work through the recommendations of the evaluation and to discern how we take PILLARS onto the next phase, following this initial pilot period. We would welcome your prayers for this! Secondly, we are keen to encourage organisations who have produced PILLARS guides in their local language to train staff or community facilitators to use them. Thirdly, we are planning to bring together a group of consultants and partners who have implemented a PILLARS training process, in order to facilitate learning and networking across different cultural contexts, and to provide them with further

training and support so that they are equipped to develop PILLARS according to their specific needs and interests. Eventually, we hope to have trained consultants available in each region in which Tearfund is working, to support any interested organization through a process of producing and using PILLARS guides.

PILLARS publications – what is available?

- *Mobilising the Church* - now available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.
- *Responding more effectively to HIV and AIDS* - available in English in October, and in French, Spanish, Portuguese and other languages in December
- *Training in facilitation skills* - available in English in October, and in French, Spanish, Portuguese in December.

Should you wish to order any of the above resources, please contact us at the address below. You can also find sample pages and more information about PILLARS on our website, www.tilz.info

PILLARS – your news

Please write and tell us how you are using the guides, and with what results. We would welcome ideas on how PILLARS fits in with other community development activities you are involved with, how you are monitoring and evaluating the impact of the guides on the user groups, and on topics for future PILLARS guides. We would also appreciate comments on how we can use this newsletter to network and to share learning more effectively.

Best wishes to you from the Resources Development Group!

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