

2nd PILLARS workshop in Brazil

**PILARES: Parceria Em Idiomas Locais
Aplicando Recursos Educativo-Sociais**

**Five days training (16th – 20th February, 2004) in
the use and production of PILLARS guides,
held at AMI's Training Centre in Chapada dos
Guimarães**

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Executive Summary

From 16th – 20th February, 23 people attended a PILLARS training workshop to develop their understanding of how and with whom the PILLARS guides can be used, and to produce guides that are relevant and useful to their diverse working contexts. Participants came from NGOs, churches and missions working both with Portuguese speaking communities in the north, north east and urban centres of the south and with indigenous communities (the Terena and Bakairi language groups) based in Matto Grosso do Sud. The workshop was held at AMI in Chapada dos Guimarães, a training and discipleship centre for indigenous leaders. It was facilitated by Tearfund's PILLARS Co-ordinator and a local consultant contracted to assist with the development of the PILLARS process in Brazil.

During the week participants looked at the aims of the PILLARS guides and process and at how PILLARS relates to the specific needs of their own communities. They worked in small groups to contextualise and translate guides specifically targeting these communities and developed facilitation skills and participatory techniques to equip them to use the guides in a way that builds the capacity of the group as a whole, and the confidence of individual group members. They also tested the guides with a local community group, an opportunity to put theory into practice, and decided on the future strategy for PILLARS in their respective language groups.

It was a wonderfully positive workshop, in terms of the levels of energy and commitment displayed by the participants, and their vision to take the process forwards in their various languages and contexts. It clarified the way forward for our partners and other agencies using the guides in the Portuguese language, and provided some very useful learning for Tearfund as to how to approach work with the indigenous community, which is a fairly new venture for Tearfund in the Brazilian context. It also provided a space and forum for individuals to come together from very different cultural backgrounds, and through times of fellowship and group working, both formal and informal, to build relationships based on a deeper understanding and respect – a privilege to watch.

It is recommended that Tearfund facilitates a third workshop in Brazil, focusing exclusively on the Indian language groups who have either been directly involved or have expressed an interest in the PILLARS process to date. What is apparent from this last workshop is the far reaching potential of the PILLARS guides to increase access to relevant and useful ideas and reading materials for Indian groups which currently have only parts of the Bible printed in their mother tongue, and little to no access to information on health, nutrition or other topics which could contribute to significant improvements in their physical and spiritual well being. It is also recommended that Tearfund supports regional facilitation skills workshops for its partner agencies and other missions, churches and NGOs using the existing Portuguese guides. This will provide the necessary impetus for those working at grassroots level to integrate the guides into their work with community groups, and for our partners to identify specific ways in which Tearfund's information resources can support and enhance other community development work they are involved in. Pr. Fernando will be key in following up the decisions made during the workshop, and it is strongly recommended that Tearfund formally acknowledges his input into this process.

Introduction

PILLARS is about working together, valuing each other's language, culture and knowledge and becoming better equipped with skills and tools that can help us make a difference in our communities...

These were some of the conclusions reached by the participants of this second PILLARS workshop in Brazil. In the north, the north east and in urban areas of Brazil, where poverty is extreme, there is a real need for printed materials that address health, disaster mitigation and other key issues relating to community development in a participatory way – literature which can be used directly with community groups, and which can equip those working with them to facilitate a process of learning and change. Amongst indigenous groups, there is next to no literature published in their local languages, save for parts of the Bible (translated by organisations such as SIL and ALEM, both represented at the workshop), and therefore no real incentive for people to use their newly acquired reading and writing skills. Many groups have little to no access to ideas coming from outside of their immediate community, including ideas which could contribute to significant improvements to their health and general well being.

It was in response to these needs that the PILLARS process had begun in June 2003, with a workshop attended by 21 people representing mission agencies, NGOs and churches working with Portuguese speaking communities, Indian communities and the deaf community, all with a concern to make development related information available to poor communities. During the workshop participants had been introduced to the PILLARS guides and process, and had developed skills in adapting the guides for use in different contexts, with different target audiences. It had been agreed that following the workshop a group of participants would contextualise an existing Portuguese guide specifically for use within Brazil, and a workshop would be planned for three or four Indian language groups, focusing on translation, facilitation skills and participatory techniques.

Having encountered huge amounts of energy and vision at this first workshop, there were various obstacles to maintaining the initial momentum of the process. A group of participants successfully contextualised *Healthy Eating* for a Brazilian audience, which is soon to be printed by Ultimato, a Christian publishing house based in São Paulo, with new illustrations produced by a local artist. However, it proved difficult to identify organisations with the time and capacity to help with the translation of a guide into the four indigenous languages originally identified, and difficult to hold together the needs and objectives and develop a common strategy for the very diverse group of participants who had attended the first workshop.

This second workshop therefore sought to increase the ownership and understanding of PILLARS among the indigenous community, and to further equip Tearfund partners and other agencies wishing to use and integrate the Portuguese guides into other project activities they are currently undertaking. Five of the 23 participants had attended the first workshop, whilst the remaining participants were new to the PILLARS approach and materials. Representing two Indian language groups located in Matto Grosso du Sud (Terena and Bakairi) and a number of NGOs and churches working in the north, north east and in urban areas in the south, 23 participants came

to AMI's training centre in Chapada dos Guimarães from 16th to 20th February for training that aimed to equip all participants with facilitation skills, participatory techniques and ideas for using PILLARS guides with local community groups, give participants the opportunity to work in small groups and to translate and contextualise existing PILLARS guides that they can use in their communities and develop a strategy for the future of PILLARS in each language group represented.

The workshop was facilitated by Tearfund's PILLARS Co-ordinator and by a local consultant who has been involved in the PILLARS process in Brazil from the outset. A local interpreter was also identified to assist the PILLARS Co-ordinator during the workshop. AMI was identified as the best organisation to host this second workshop, given that it offers discipleship training to potential leaders from many different Indian groups, and as such brings together key members of the indigenous community. AMI's acting co-ordinator for PILLARS is also currently acting as the national co-ordinator of CONPLEI, the National Council of Indian Pastors and Evangelical Leaders and also as the co-ordinator for the translation of PILLARS guides into the Terena language.

Findings

The workshop combined activities from the *Facilitation Skills Workbook* and activities from the original *PILLARS Workbook*. The methodology used was participatory, in order to model the approach to information sharing and change that is promoted in the guides.

Day 1

It began with a short opening ceremony on Sunday night. The workshop activities then formally began on the Monday morning with a group Bible study on the theme of working together, taken *Building the Capacity of Local Groups*. This generated some useful discussion and reflection on a theme which is central to the methodology of PILLARS. During the week, the participants had many opportunities to put theory into practice, as they worked together in small groups to translate, contextualise and use PILLARS guides, and the evaluation forms show that this was one of the key areas of learning for many present.

The first session consisted of a time of personal introductions, sharing hopes and concerns and setting objectives for the week. In the second session, the participants were divided into small groups and asked what factors from prevent their communities accessing information that would help them make positive changes in their lives, and why. The participants were then introduced to the main aim of PILLARS, that of responding to this need for improved access to relevant and useful information, in languages spoken by local people and in a format that is highly visual and that generates discussion. The PILLARS Co-ordinator presented the findings of the research that led to the creation of PILLARS, and the specific objectives of the guides and the process. The participants looked at existing guides to gain an overview of the content and layout, and the aim and composition of each section of a guide. It was agreed that what is distinctive about the PILLARS guides is their participatory approach to sharing and using information. It was considered that such an approach is

vital if communities are to reflect on and apply printed information in a way that stimulates real change.

The participants were then given some background to the process as it has developed in different countries around the world, and an update on the process in Brazil. At this stage, those who had already used the PILLARS resources in their work were given an opportunity to share their learning. It was encouraging and informative for Tearfund to find out exactly how participants of the previous workshop had applied their learning and what difficulties they had faced. It also provided other participants with concrete examples of how the guides can be adapted and used in specific (and very diverse) contexts, and following a day consisting mostly of theory, this was a positive way to conclude!

Day 2

The morning of day 2 focused on facilitation skills and participatory techniques, with a view to equipping the participants to use the guides in a way that encourages other members of the group to contribute their knowledge and experience, a creative exchange of ideas that stimulates change. Each group enacted a different role play to draw attention to different scenarios that may arise when using the guides. This was followed by a plenary discussion around how a facilitator might best respond to these different situations. The first role play demonstrated the temptation to teach rather than facilitate when leading a discussion, and the limitations that this places on other group members, inhibited from sharing their own ideas. The second role play illustrated a situation of conflict between two group members. The third role play illustrated the problem posed by a dominant individual who monopolises the discussion. It was suggested that having a limitation on the number of verbal contributions made by each group member, and allocating the dominant member with responsibility for a specific task (eg. minuting the meeting) could help provide a balance in this situation.

The role play was a very effective way to draw out learning points and to engage all participants in a reflection around some general obstacles to participatory group discussion. This initial reflection was followed by a more in depth discussion around the specific barriers and incentive to participation, for which participants were divided into groups by geographical region, with one group formed of those working in an urban context. Barriers mentioned by those in the north and north east included fear, lack of self-confidence and motivation resulting from authoritative and dishonest community leaders, and a poverty and dependency mindset, by which people have assumed the role of 'receiver', rather than taking responsibility for their own future. The Terena group mentioned feelings of inadequacy and political divisions and distrust. In order to overcome these obstacles, we need to start from where people are, rather than where we want them to be, and to identify and collaborate with those individuals who do have vision, hope and love for their communities, and who believe in the potential for change. It was suggested that using the PILLARS guides to structure a sensitive and potentially divisive discussion could help their communities to address conflict in a constructive way, rather than it never being openly confronted. It was also agreed that the relationships of trust that already exist with those present at the workshop could inspire their communities with confidence and in turn encourage them to use the PILLARS materials. Building good relationships with group members

and sharing the message of hope and of the real possibility of change through faith in the Living God were considered to be of real importance in all of these different contexts.

In the afternoon, the participants were split into two groups – one consisting of those who would be using PILLARS guides in the Portuguese language, the other consisting of those wanting to translate PILLARS into their indigenous languages. The first group then spent this and various subsequent sessions contextualising *Preparing for Disasters*, which had already been translated into but not printed in Portuguese, and which was originally written with an African audience in mind. The group was given some guidelines on adapting text so that the content, language and illustrations are relevant for the specific target audience. They decided on which pages of the guide should be omitted (the pages on cyclones and earthquakes), which revised and which written (four new double pages on fires, storms, drought and landslides) for the Brazilian context, and divided up the work to be carried out in small groups. The translation groups began a translation of *Building the Capacity of Local Groups* into the Terena and Bakairi languages, following a review of key principles in translating this type of literature – a very different process to translating the Bible! The two groups then worked independently for the rest of the afternoon, coming together at the end of the day to share learning points and for a brief introduction to the field study visit that would take place the following day.

Day 3

The purpose of the field study visit was to give participants an opportunity to turn theory into practice and to test the PILLARS guides with a local community group. The group identified was a community garden project, founded by a German priest in 1989 with the aim of providing employment and income for poor families in the area. The project has a strong leader and a solid but informal structure, so that member families may share agricultural techniques amongst themselves, but do not work together or come together formally to discuss or share knowledge. The project is also entirely dependent on funding from Germany, where the founder originated, and on the existing leader, for its sustainability.

The participants had been divided into groups and asked to prepare a discussion based on a double page of a PILLARS guide, on a topic they considered would be relevant and useful to the community group. They were also given a set of suggested questions to put to the group, in order to determine what access the group has to new ideas and how they might use printed information such as PILLARS to help them in their work together.

The visit proved to be hugely beneficial, both for the participants and for the group visited, in the immediate term at least! Participants had chosen topics that were of genuine interest to the group: Dreaming Dreams, Planning, Unity is Strength and Working Together To Set Up An Income Generating Project. They facilitated the discussions with sensitivity and energy, using role play and humour to relax and engage the group, and seating themselves among the group members to break down any division between the facilitators and ‘facilitated’. The leader said that in the 15 years that he had worked there, this was the first group to bring and to leave something with them rather than just to look and to buy. It was also the first time they

themselves had come together as a group, but he said that following our visit they would meet again to share what they had discussed in their smaller groups, so that all could benefit from the learning.

The participants said they had come to appreciate just how valuable everyone's contribution is – the individuals who they least expected to give useful suggestions turned out to be key players in the discussions. They realised the value in the discussion process – even if no conclusions were ever reached, guided discussion can be so creative and can open up new possibilities by helping people think about their situation in a new way. They had gained confidence in adapting the PILLARS materials and in facilitation, learning by doing and also by watching others. They realised that where only one or two members of the group are literate they are still able to share printed information with others in the context of a group discussion. One of the Terena group said the visit had provided them with the opportunity to do for others what the facilitators of the PILLARS workshop had done for them, and that they had enjoyed learning together, both during the preparation for the visit as well as during the visit itself.

Day 4

The fourth day was given to working in small groups on the contextualisation and translation of the two respective guides. Those contextualising reviewed each other's work, and wrote new pages for the guide. Those translating divided into groups and each group completed three double pages and checked each other's work. The evaluation forms indicate that these sessions were considered to be the most useful sessions of the workshop. The group contextualising learnt about the linguistic differences that exist within their country, as they worked with people from other regions! And for many this was the first time they had written development education materials targeting the grassroots level, and gained a new understanding of how information can be adapted to different audiences. They decided how the outstanding work (mainly review) would be completed, and set up a network by which this and other activities would be co-ordinated.

Five of the seven people translating had no previous experience in this area, so again this was an opportunity to develop new skills and to learn from each other. Some of the more technical concepts were difficult to translate into their language, since they are new and 'foreign' to the cultural context, but as the group translated the text they became more convinced of its use for their communities. The Terena group divided up the remaining text between them, and identified other people in their communities who could help them complete the translation prior to a third workshop. They chose an editor to go through the final draft, checking for consistency of language and register, and an artist to draw new illustrations for the guide. There was only one representative of the Bakairi language group present, and although he did very well considering he was on his own, (he is enrolled at university, speaks English, teachers in a bilingual school) he was frustrated at not being able to make more progress with the support of a larger group. However, it is hoped that with the support of another member of the Bakairi tribe who attended the first workshop and who is on the staff of AMI, and the support of another participant due to attend this second workshop, the translation will be completed in advance of a third workshop.

Day 5

The final day centred on decisions about the future development of the PILLARS process in Brazil, in both the Portuguese language and in different indigenous languages. The following decisions were taken:

PILLARS in the Portuguese language:

Participants from the first and second workshop will be divided into four regional groups, comprising a network that will act as the PILLARS Committee for Brazil: the north (Amazonas), the centre and west, the south and the north east.

This network will be responsible for:

- completing the contextualisation of *Preparing for Disasters* (to be printed in June 2004)
- co-ordinating any future regional training workshops in facilitation skills
- sharing learning and ideas
- contextualising or writing new guides

All those wanting to use the guides in Portuguese felt the next steps in the PILLARS process would be for them to promote the guides and methodology within their organisations, and to train their staff / church workers/ community workers in facilitation skills and participatory techniques, so that they more people are equipped to use the guides, where they themselves are not always working directly with communities. The participants themselves expressed interest in leading 3 day facilitation skills workshops based on *Facilitation Skills Workbook*, which they could do either individually within their respective organisations, or alongside other participants, bringing together staff from different organisations across a given region. It was agreed that two Tearfund partners would be well placed to host any such collaborative workshop that took place in the NE.

Although participants also talked about coming together again to contextualise and write new guides, it was agreed that they should first start by using the contextualised guides that they do already have, and by training others to use them in a way that encourages participation. If funds were available they could meet / share ideas over the email in order to produce other guides, either for use in Brazil as a whole, or for use in their respective regions. A meeting for all PILLARS facilitators could be planned for 2005, during which new guides could be written and experience and learning shared.

PILLARS in indigenous languages:

It was agreed that further training would be needed to consolidate the learning from this workshop and to bring other language groups on board – groups which had already shown interested in PILLARS or had been represented at the first workshop, but were unable to participate at this time. The key organisations to involve in this process are AMI, SIL, ALEM and AMTB.

Plans were made for a third PILLARS workshop focusing on translation of guides for use by the indigenous community, to be held in the first week of August at AMI's

training centre. The Terena and Bakairi groups will be invited to continue their involvement in the process; the Caiua, Kaingang and Guarani groups, who have either already been involved in the first workshop or have subsequently expressed interest in translating the guides, plus representatives of several other language groups who will already be present at AMI at this time.

Evaluation

The energy, vision and levels of commitment to the PILLARS process encountered during the workshop far exceeded Tearfund's expectations! Those who had previously attended training said that they benefited from the opportunity to have the learning reinforced in what was a very different context and a very different group dynamic. They also did a wonderful job of sharing their experiences of using the PILLARS guides, helping and encouraging others. Those who were new to PILLARS picked up the key concepts and methods very quickly, and they all applied themselves to the work at hand, whilst enjoying each other's company and having time to explore the local area. It is the last time that those using the guides in Portuguese and those translating into indigenous languages will meet for training within the context of PILLARS, as it is clear that very different strategies are required for these respective groups. However, the fellowship and group work seemed to provide a wonderful opportunity for relationship building and deepened understanding of two very different cultures. The AMI staff were wonderfully hospitable and accommodating, and ensured that the daily activities ran smoothly and to time. Their holistic approach was also inspiring. The network established for those using the guides in Portuguese should facilitate future communication and collaboration, and will hopefully encourage Tearfund partners to take on the ownership of PILLARS in the future.

Conclusions

The PILLARS process has followed quite a unique course in Brazil, in response to a desire to target not only Portuguese speaking communities with whom our partners work, but also the indigenous community, which is comprised of several hundred distinct language groups, and with which Tearfund previously had no history of involvement. It has not been without its challenges! But what is apparent following this last workshop is just how beneficial both of these distinct groups consider the PILLARS resources and process to be, for their differing reasons; the group using the guides in Portuguese primarily seeing them in terms of their potential to train community workers in basic participatory development, the indigenous communities seeing the process as a means of getting useful literature produced in their mother tongue that gives value to local knowledge and culture and also improving access to new ideas. All those who participated in this event were able to see the potential of the methodology of the guides to empower the groups using them, and to encourage people to work together and to learn from each other – things the participants themselves seemed to consider as the main learning points of the workshop. It was an enormous privilege to be a part of that learning process, to see the energy with which the participants applied themselves to the various activities and to building relationships with other members of the group. It was also a reminder of how adaptable the PILLARS approach and guides really are, and the fact that they really can be as useful as a tool for stimulating participatory development.

**Appendix A
Timetable**

	7:30 – 8:00	8:30 – 10:15	10:30 – 12:00	14:00 – 15:45	16:00 – 17:45	20:00 – 21:30
Monday	Devotional	Session 1 Introductions Introducing Tearfund Hopes and concerns Objectives of the workshop Timetable Workshop committees	Session 2 The role of information in community development The origins of PILLARS Aims and objectives of PILLARS guides	Session 3 Review of PILLARS guides	Session 4 Aims and objectives of the PILLARS process PILLARS around the world PILLARS in Brazil: timeline and overview	
Tuesday	Devotional	Session 5 Facilitation skills: role play and reflection What makes a good facilitator How we can encourage participation and change	Session 6 Facilitation practice in small groups	Session 7 Preparing to contextualise and translate PILLARS guides	Session 8 Contextualising and translating in small groups Introduction to field study visit – aims and activities	Sharing about our organisations
Wednesday	Devotional	Session 9 Preparation for field study visit – materials, questions and group discussion	Session 10 Preparation for field study visit – materials, questions and group discussion	Session 11 Field study visit	Session 12 Field study visit and outing	Feedback on field study visit
Thursday	Devotional	Session 13 Contextualising and translating in small groups Reviewing each other's work	Session 14 Contextualising and translating in small groups	Session 15 Writing and translation in small groups	Session 16 Outing	Outing
Friday	Devotional	Session 17 The way ahead: sustainability of the PILLARS process in the Portuguese language and in indigenous languages	Session 18 The way ahead: Discussion and feedback	Session 19 Promoting, gaining ownership and integrating PILLARS Monitoring and evaluating PILLARS	Session 20 Workshop evaluation Closing ceremony Departure	