

**1<sup>st</sup> PILLARS Workshop**

**Wolaitta Kale Heywet Church and  
Tearfund**

**24<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2003**

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## **Executive Summary**

The first PILLARS workshop in Ethiopia was held in Soddo, Wolaitta, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2003, with Tearfund partner Wolaitta Kale Heywet Church (WKHC).

Twenty-four members of the evangelism, development and literacy ministries of WKHC attended, from the eight different fellowships of which the church is comprised.

The workshop introduced participants to the aims and objectives of the PILLARS resources and to the participatory approach to sharing information that the resources promote. It also sought to provide an overall picture of the different stages of the process of producing printed literature in local languages, and to give participants an opportunity to devise a joint strategy for the development of that process within the Wolaitta context. Two days were devoted to translating an existing PILLARS guide, *Mobilising the Community*, from English into the local language. Participants then visited local community groups to pilot the translated resources and to determine the felt need for such resources in their respective communities.

The week was a time of hard work, learning and enjoyment. Although the majority of the participants had very little prior experience of translation and found it difficult to produce something of quality in the given time, they all applied themselves with faith and commitment to the task at hand. They were supported by a professional and experienced editorial committee, comprised of three members of the existing group. The committee was able to address some of these weaknesses and improve the quality of the work.

Many of the participants were unfamiliar with the participatory methodology of the workshop, and were initially quite uncertain as to how to work within it. But it proved to be very empowering, as they grew together as a group through their work together, and individuals seemed to gain confidence and to share more openly and generously as the week progressed.

The diversity of backgrounds and experience of the participants was also a strength, in terms of the different perspectives they brought to their work. They were able to produce something that is representative of the different ministries of the church and of the different areas within the region.

The participants also showed real enthusiasm for producing something that is to be of real relevance and use to their different communities. The field study visits confirmed that the need for printed information on agriculture, health and community development is real, and that the content and design of the guides lend themselves to stimulating change at grassroots level.

A decision was taken for each participant to pilot the guides with identified community groups and to bring their learning to the second workshop. A two day training will be held at the end of April to equip the participants to conduct a baseline survey in their respective communities, using the questionnaires and methodology proposed by

Tearfund. A second workshop will be held in June, during which *Building the Capacity of Local Groups* will be translated. There will also be sessions on facilitation skills and participatory techniques, with a view to equipping participants to use the guides more effectively in their communities. The first translated guide will also be revised on the basis of feedback from the pilot discussions, and will subsequently be printed and distributed to all eight fellowships across the zone.

The WKHC PILLARS Co-ordinator and local consultant facilitated the workshop confidently, and demonstrated a thorough understanding of the PILLARS resources and process. It was acknowledged that if the guides are to be effectively used as a tool for change at grassroots level, the PILLARS work needs to be fully integrated into the different ministries and activities of the church. The leadership of WKHC expressed their desire to see the work owned by the church as a whole, and agreed to ensure a greater involvement of staff from the development department at subsequent workshops in order to facilitate this. They also agreed to support the WKHC PILLARS Co-ordinator in his role as facilitator, and to provide additional administrative assistance in the run up to and during the workshops as necessary. Specific individuals with experience of translation, editing and writing will be invited to part of the second workshop to help participants address particular translation problems and to provide further training in general translation principles. The Chairman and General Secretary of each fellowship will be invited to attend the closing ceremony of the third workshop, to raise awareness of the PILLARS work and to ensure that the workshop participants are actively supported by their churches in this ministry.

The Wolaitta workshop was enormously challenging and inspiring. Moreover, Ethiopia as a country is fertile ground for PILLARS. The need for information in the languages most commonly used by grassroots communities is real and widespread, and there is great potential for replicating the process with other Tearfund partners and for sharing the resources with other agencies.

## **Introduction**

The first PILLARS workshop in Ethiopia was held in Soddo, Wolaitta, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2003, with Tearfund partner Wolaitta Kale Heywet Church (WKHC).

The PILLARS process seeks to harness and maximise on local knowledge and experience in order to encourage critical thinking and positive action through its discussion based approach to learning and sharing information. PILLARS aims to build the capacity of local groups by increasing their livelihood options and imparting new skills, and to stimulate changes in the local community by putting people at the centre of the development process. It is a tool which Tearfund's partners can effectively use to support "local church congregations acting with the poor, championing transformation in their communities"- the thrust of the current strategy for the East and Southern Africa region.

Over eighty different languages are spoken within Ethiopia. Under previous governments, the use of these ethnic languages was actively discouraged. Education was conducted in Amharic and all official documentation and business in this 'superior' language. The current government, by contrast, is constitutionally committed to a policy of decentralisation and self-determination of the different ethnic groups of which Ethiopia is comprised. Whether this is out of a genuine desire to empower people by giving increased recognition to ethnic identities, or a policy of divide and rule, it is slowly causing attitudes towards local languages to change, as local languages are used for government administration at regional level, and increasingly for primary education.

The church has great potential to be an agent of transformation within the community. Unlike the government, it has influence and presence right the way down to the level of each individual household. In the absence of institutions of formal education, the church has also traditionally played a large role in educating the community. Christian agencies, such as the Bible Society of Ethiopia, Scripture Union, SIM and SIL are involved in translating the Bible and other theological materials. Tearfund partner KHC has a large literature department and employs a number of staff involved in translation work; many other churches have information departments or centres and produce quarterly magazines. However, very little is written directly into the local language, and very little on topics such as health, agriculture or community change, which are not explicitly of a spiritual nature. There is a distinct divide between the development and evangelism departments of the church and traditionally little recognition of the importance of literature that seeks to help people address very practical needs as part of the wider mission of the church.

It was decided that Wolaitta would be an ideal context in which to begin this work.

The Wolaitta people are the dominant people out of the two main groups within the Wolaitta zone. They are also quite a homogenous group, with the same culture, language and world view. Wolaitta is one of the most densely populated areas of Ethiopia, and one third of its population belong to the Wolaitta Kale Heywet Church. WKHC is also where the Kale Heywet Church originated, and as such has a well established structure and network for sharing information and learning. It has a literature department, and a printing press and bookshop on site, making publication, distribution and sale of books

fairly straightforward. There is very little literature that is originally written into Wolaitigna. Many ‘spiritual’ books are translated from English, but are often inappropriate to the local context.

In autumn 2002, a consultant to WKHC, a long standing Tearfund partner, met with the leadership to determine the potential for integrating the use and production of PILLARS guides into the church’s existing ministry. WKHC agreed to begin the PILLARS process, and invited twenty-four church members to attend this first PILLARS workshop. Two or three came from each of the eight church fellowships of which WKHC is comprised, and were joined by members of the full time staff of WKHC- two from the literature department, one from the development department, the Chairman and Secretary of the Women’s ministry, and a consultant. Among the participants were a member of the youth ministry and an artist. Twenty of the participants were men and four were women.

The first workshop was facilitated by Tearfund’s PILLARS Co-ordinator, a representative of the partner organisation and a local consultant. This consultant had been identified by the Desk Officer and Regional Adviser, not only to help with the facilitation of this workshop, but also to be trained in the PILLARS approach and process, with a view to providing ongoing support to partners involved with PILLARS in the future.

## **Activities**

### **Day 1**

The aim of the first day was to build relationships, and to introduce participants to the main aims and objectives of PILLARS and of this first PILLARS workshop. Participants were asked to share their expectations of the workshop, which can be summarised as follows:

- To develop, enrich their knowledge and use of the Wolaitta language
- To work, discuss together, learn from each other
- To see a change in the attitudes and behaviour of the people using the PILLARS guides

They were also asked to share their concerns:

- Sustainability of the production of written materials in the local language- including financial sustainability
- Lack of trained and qualified personnel to carry out the translation work
- The level of commitment required if the work is to bear fruit
- Measuring the impact of the work
- Application of the training to the participants’ diverse contexts and vocations

The participants were then asked to consider where their communities obtain information on agriculture, and the extent to which these different sources of information are trusted. Most information on agriculture was accessed via development agents, local farmers and district agricultural offices, with radio, school, newspapers and other written information being harder to access. Farmers, development agents and government administration

offices were the most trusted information sources, as those with first hand knowledge and experience.

Participants were then divided into two groups and asked to debate the question 'Producing printed materials in the Wolaitta language is a waste of time and money'. Strong arguments were put forward, both for and against this statement:

For

- If the materials were to be in *English* or *Amharic*, readers would be able not only to learn from the content but also to improve their knowledge of these languages, which is necessary for those who wish to be educated or to work outside of the (relatively small) Wolaitta area
- There are already other pressures and demands on our time – finding food, involvement in more practical development projects
- There is no real market for books

Against

- God created all languages, and as Christians we have a duty to use and cultivate the language we have been given
- If knowledge and experience are written down, they can be shared with many, over time
- The use of the local language is being promoted by the current government eg. nearly all primary education is now conducted in the local language. The production of written materials in the local language could prove to be lucrative.

Following a very lively and enjoyable debate, there was a unanimous vote in opposition to the statement. Participants then worked together in groups to assess the relevance of the content and design of a selection of the guides- and more specifically the guide to be translated- for their local communities, and to assess the discussion based approach as a means of encouraging participation and empowering the users.

## **Day 2**

Following feedback on the content and design of the guides, participants started to translate part of a text, and were given some general principles to guide them in their work. They were divided into translation groups, and began a first draft of the guide in the Wolaitta language. The majority of the participants had little to no previous experience of translation, and although some of them had a very good knowledge of English, others needed the text to be orally translated into Amharic before they could translate into the local language. Morale was quite low, initially, but the groups worked well together and encouraged and supported one another, and grew in confidence as the week went on.

### **Day 3**

This was almost exclusively devoted to translation, and the editorial committee was set up and began work on the completed first drafts. There was also a session introducing participants to the aims and objectives of the field visits, and time given to making initial preparations for this.

### **Day 4**

The translation of the guide was completed, and preparations for the field visits finalised. In the afternoon, the participants visited five different church groups in the Soddo area. It was intended that of these groups two would be women's, two farmers and one a youth group. But due to a misunderstanding, all five groups included a diversity of church members, numbering around 40 per group. This meant that the targeted material and activities prepared by the participants had to be slightly adapted. But the discussions were managed really well using the pre-prepared translated text, illustrations and questions to build on existing knowledge and experience and to slowly introduce new possibilities and perspectives. Drama and role play was used effectively to engage the groups and to create a relaxed atmosphere, and individual group members were very willing to participate and to answer questions about their communities and about their views on and need for written information.

### **Day 5**

On the final day, participants shared and discussed their findings from the field visits, which can be summarised as follows:

- Producing literature in the Wolaitta language

The field study visits suggest that on average, the same number of people are literate in Wolaitigna as in Amharic (although this claim would have to be substantiated with further research), and many would want the guides available in both languages. Although it was not always a majority view, all the groups visited expressed a concern that reading in the Wolaitta language was not going to benefit their children's wider development, or facilitate the integration of their community into the wider context. Amharic or English would be more conducive towards this. Moreover, young people tend to read the Wolaitta language in the Latin script, rather than with the Amharic characters. The current translation of the guide into the latter script will therefore be more attractive to the older generation. However, most said that for the activities of their daily lives and for discussions about anything that was important to them, they always used the Wolaitta language and recognised the value of using this language if knowledge is to be truly assimilated. A complete version of the Bible in Wolaitigna is currently being published, so the local language will be increasingly used within the church; the government is also promoting primary education in the local language- and attitudes towards the local language are becoming more positive as a result. One lady who was illiterate in English and Amharic had taught herself to read Wolaitigna by reading the translated New



Testament. She was really keen to read more literature in this language – especially literature that is produced by their own people, as there is so much that is translated from English which is quite inappropriate for their local context.

- Attitudes towards the written word

Given the tradition of oral literature, learning is often considered to be synonymous with listening. This, coupled with the lack of access to written information, means that the written word does not carry as much weight or validity as the spoken word. The fact that the PILLARS guides are to be used by groups, where the person leading the discussion is responsible for bringing that information to the group, is therefore an advantage, in terms of gaining legitimacy for the written word through combining it with more traditional ways of learning.

Within church groups, members seemed to be primarily interested in literature that was overtly spiritual in nature, and so especially appreciated the Bible studies in the guides – and in fact wanted more Biblical references within the text itself. They had little access to any literature which was not purely ‘spiritual’ in nature and were therefore not used to considering development issues from a spiritual perspective. The pastor has enormous influence over the opinions and attitudes of his congregation! He is often the main source of new ideas and information for the less educated members. Pastors are therefore key individuals to target if the church as a whole is to use and own the guides, and if people are to really value and learn from the material.

#### ✍️ Attitudes towards the content and design of guides

Groups reported that they would prefer the guides to be A5 sized, so that they could fit into their pockets! They would be used more frequently if this were the case.

Many of the groups expressed an attitude of hesitance and uncertainty when discussing issues around self-reliance and change. Some were expecting the participants to initiate new development projects, or to give money. However, one group said they genuinely wanted information, not money, and wanted to pay for the guides and for the participants to return on an agreed date with the printed copies for them to be presented to the whole church. The group said they would feel more confident in using the guide with an outside facilitator or trainer, who could guide them through the planning process.

The groups visited were interested in literature on the following topics: micro-credit and loans, agriculture, married life, personal hygiene and sanitation.

The rest of the final day was given to reviewing and evaluating the week and planning the way ahead. Participants discussed in groups and then in plenary, and the following decisions were taken:

- The *Mobilising the Community* guide should be edited, typed, checked, photocopied and distributed within one month ie by the beginning of April.

- 120 guides will be photocopied, five for each participant to pilot with a specific group within their community. A time will be given to sharing findings on the first day of the second workshop – and amendments made to the guides and to the process as a whole accordingly.
- Participants will also promote the guides within their respective churches and fellowships before the next workshop, to try to get wider ownership of the PILLARS work.
- From 29<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May, WKHC, with support from the local PILLARS consultant, will provide training in conducting a baseline survey. Participants will then carry out surveys with identified community groups, using the proposed questionnaire and methodology, and will bring their data to the second workshop for discussion and analysis.
- The second workshop will be held from 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> June. A number of individuals with translation, writing and editing experience will be invited to attend part of the workshop (probably day 3) to give help with specific translation problems, and to share general translation principles, and representatives of the development department will also attend. The content of the workshop will include:
  - a time of feedback and discussion on the findings from piloting the guides with local community groups, and from the baseline surveys
  - the translation of *Building the Capacity of Local Groups*
  - sessions on facilitation skills and participatory techniques
- The General Secretary and chairman of each of the eight fellowships will be invited to the closing ceremony of the third workshop, to promote the PILLARS work

### **Evaluation of the workshop**

- The workshop was a time of hard work, enjoyment and learning, and the individual evaluations showed that the participants found both the content and methodology useful and challenging. They seemed to grasp the vision of PILLARS very quickly, and showed real enthusiasm to carry the work forward, and to see it bear fruit in their communities. However, they were also realistic about the potential obstacles and pitfalls, and about the need to ensure that the work is owned by the church leadership and by the communities using the guides, and that it is sustainable.
- The field visits confirmed that there is a real desire and need for locally generated printed information on issues such as agriculture, health and community development, and for this participatory approach to sharing information which puts the community groups at the centre of the development process and seeks to move people away from a culture of dependence on NGOs and other outsiders for help. However, negative attitudes towards the local language are an obstacle to people using the guides, as is the increased use of the latin script among young people. Although attitudes are changing, and the older generation still have a strong preference for the Amharic script, it is also true that it is easier for participants to translate directly from Amharic into the local language than it is for them to translate

from English. These issues need to be explored during the pilot stage and baseline survey, and further discussed at the second workshop.

- The participatory approach used throughout the workshop was new to the majority of the participants, who are more familiar with a top down educational approach, where they are receivers of information from a preacher or a teacher. But following initial uncertainties on the first day, they participated really well in the different group activities and feedback sessions, and understood the importance of the approach to the success of the PILLARS guides, as demonstrated in the impressive facilitation of discussions during the field visits.
- The presence of representatives of the eight different fellowships and evangelism, development and literature ministries of WKHC was a great advantage. The guides that they write and translate are more likely to get the ownership of the whole area, and will be richer and more representative of the whole zone. However, a greater representation of the development department of the church would undoubtedly have been beneficial throughout the workshop, particularly since the *Mobilising the Community* guide contains a lot of concepts and language which are quite specific to the development sector, and with which many of the participants were unfamiliar. PILLARS is a process which falls between the evangelism, development and spiritual ministries of the church. While it has the potential to bring these different ministries together, it also risks falling between all three and being owned by none, unless there is a commitment to invest in it and seek out concrete ways to integrate it into existing and future work.
- Many of those who attended the workshop did not have sufficient knowledge of English or experience of translation to fully participate in the translation work – which was frustrating for them, and meant that the bulk of the work fell to the few who had skills in both of these areas. A member of the editorial committee suggested that the criteria for participants of the workshop should be reviewed, and that Tearfund should consider setting minimum requirements that are more rigorously adhered to, if the literature produced is to be of a quality that people want to buy. That said, all the participants worked hard, and those who found the translation more difficult are very keen to be involved in actually using the finished guides in their communities (and proved themselves to be very good facilitators, as the field visits showed). Everyone, without exception, applied themselves and persevered with faith and commitment, and they worked together very effectively in their translation groups and as a larger team, making use of the different skills and experience represented. The three members of the editorial committee all brought extensive experience of Bible translation, and of evangelism and pastoral care, IT and development work. They are all based within the Soddo area, and work closely with the WKHC head quarters, making communication and ongoing editorial work easier.

## **Conclusions**

It was very exciting and encouraging to encounter so much energy, vision and commitment to seeing the PILLARS work take root – and such a desire to do the work professionally and to really impact communities at grassroots level. PILLARS has real potential to bring together the different ministries of the church and to challenge Christians to reach out to others, feeding into the current regional strategy to see local churches as agents and initiators of change in their communities. The *Mobilising the Community* guide and the guide on capacity building which is to be subsequently translated lend themselves towards the promotion of holistic development in both their content and approach. There is great potential within Wolaitta, but also beyond: Ethiopia is fertile ground for the PILLARS process! Tearfund should pursue the possibility of replicating the workshops with other partners, using their existing expertise in and contacts with resource people who can help with translation. Guides could be produced in Amharic and distributed to other Tearfund partners; they could then be translated into local languages through another series of workshops, and possibly be used as a post-literacy resource to compliment existing literacy programmes. Tearfund should also explore the possibility of networking with agencies such as SIL, SIM, the Bible Society and Scripture Union, to draw on existing knowledge and expertise and to promote the PILLARS resources more widely.

**Schedule for PILLARS Workshop - - Wolaitta Kale Heywet Church  
(February 23 - March 1, 2003 )**

<b>Days</b>	<b>Session One 8:30 - 10:15</b>	<b>Session Two 10:45 --12:30</b>	<b>Session Three 2:00-3:45</b>	<b>Session Four 4:00-5:30</b>
<b>Sunday</b>				- Registration Participants Introduction Social Event
<b>Monday</b>	- Gener. Introductions - Leveling Expectations - Workshop Objectives and Program - Experience sharing	- What is PILLARS & Why workshop? Information sources	- The Importance of producing printed materials in local language	- Setting specific objectives - Principle how PILLARS process works
<b>Tuesday</b>	- Tips to Translation Translating Experience	- Group Formation Translating in Teams	- Quality of Translation - Reviewing translation work	- Practical session  - Team work
<b>Wednesday</b>	- Translating and reviewing in teams	- Translating & reviewing Cont.	- Preparation for Field visit - Listen and Interviewing	- Reviewing translation work
<b>Thursday</b>	- Finalize Reviewing and checking translation	- Finalize preparation for field visit	- Field visit	- Field visit
<b>Friday</b>	- Feedback findings from Field visit °	- Developing the strategy to Literacy work	- Action Planning - Agreeing the way forward	- Workshop outputs of participants Evaluation