

Terralingua Annual Report, 2003

In 2003, Terralingua (TL) continued to develop its work program, the Global Biocultural Diversity Assessment (GBCDA), under the Ford Foundation grant that was received in 2001, as well as a new grant from The Christensen Fund, received in early 2003. The GBCDA is a multi-year program that aims to increase understanding of the interlinkages between linguistic, cultural, and biological diversity worldwide, as well as promote a biocultural approach in policy and on-the-ground projects. The GBCDA includes three main projects: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mappings of biocultural diversity; Index of Biocultural Diversity; and Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity. Activities related to each of these projects are described below, followed by a summary of other activities and institutional matters and by a financial report for 2003.

1. GIS Mappings of Biocultural Diversity

The purpose of these mappings is to depict the overlapping distributions of the world's biological and cultural diversity (the latter represented by linguistic diversity) and to analyze the observed correlations, yielding data that can inform policy recommendations for both environmental conservation and sustainable development.

- Activities in 2003 followed up and expanded upon work previously carried out by TL in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and UNESCO, which led to the development of a GIS database of the world's ecoregions and languages. One of the products of this earlier work, the booklet Sharing a World of Difference: The Earth's Linguistic, Cultural, and Biological Diversity and the companion map The World's Biocultural Diversity: People, Languages, and Ecosystems, written by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Luisa Maffi, and David Harmon, was published by UNESCO in 2003.
- TL conducted an internal review of our existing data, as well as a consultative peer review with GIS and mapping experts in the field. The Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) was then contracted to help rework, redevelop, and analyze the database.
- New layers were added and analyzed representing biological data, including the University of Maryland 's most recent database of world forest cover and human footprint data, to show levels of degradation of the environment by humans.
- This new work also included an effort to provide a better representation of the geographical distribution of the most linguistically diverse regions of the world in relation to the distribution of biodiversity, by expressing linguistic diversity through levels of density around the world.

• The new data were showcased at the World Parks Congress (September 2003), where TL in partnership with IUCN-The World Conservation Union and Conservation International gave special focus to cross-mapping parks/protected areas and indigenous peoples' lands in a workshop on the subject.

2. Index of Biocultural Diversity (IBCD)

The IBCD is modeled after indexes used in the environmental field to gauge current conditions and trends in the state of the environment. Its purpose is to jointly measure global trends in biological and cultural diversity using a small number of indicators, and thus serve as a benchmark for changes in biocultural diversity. This index is meant to fill a noted lack of meaningful sociocultural indicators in global environmental assessments, which has hampered the deployment of a "humans-in-environment" perspective in policy and on-the-ground action.

- Based on work started in 2002, a draft framework of the IBCD was completed by David Harmon and Jonathan Loh. This 385-page document, including over 50 tables and nearly 75 figures, outlines the theory and methodology behind the IBCD and presents several integrated measures of the ethnolinguistic and biological diversity of each of the world's countries, with initial analyses of the results.
- The draft was sent out to a wide range of reviewers internationally for comment, and comments received were compiled in view of revising the draft. Several adjustments of the IBCD methodology were made as a consequence.
- Harmon and Loh started preparing a research report to be submitted to a scholarly journal for additional peer-review.

3. Global Source Book on Biocultural Diversity (GSB)

This new project, started in late 2003, aims to provide the first global source of information about projects, programs, and initiatives that take an integrated biocultural approach to environmental conservation and maintenance and revitalization of local languages and cultural traditions. It is also meant to offer an overview of the field of biocultural diversity and a variety of bibliographic and other resources on biocultural diversity.

- Preparations were made to launch a worldwide survey of biocultural diversity projects. A call for information and survey form were prepared by Luisa Maffi and Ellen Woodley and sent out to an extensive contact list.
- The free ICONS database was adapted by Rebecca Stranberg for the purpose of storing and cataloguing information from the surveys as well as bibliographic information.

• A comprehensive database of bibliographic references on biocultural diversity was started, for the purpose of conducting a review of the literature on this field. For many of the references, the full-text electronic version was acquired and stored on CD-Rom.

4. Other Activities

In addition to its projects, TL carries out a variety of activities to promote the biocultural perspective in international arenas, the media, and the general public.

- In 2003, a main focus of these activities was the Vth World Parks Congress (WPC) in September 2003 in Durban, South Africa. TL's participation contributed to a greater emphasis on the human dimensions of conservation and on the need to create cultural, socio-economic and other human dimensions targets, in addition to the biological targets previously defining global and local protected area management practices.
- Also at the WPC, in collaboration with IUCN and Conservation International we contributed to highlighting, using our GIS database, the lack of incorporation thus far of indigenous perspectives and needs in conservation, in a workshop focusing on the "gaps in protected area management".
- Also at the WPC, TL helped influence critical language on biocultural diversity conservation for the Durban Accord, to give socio-cultural aspects due consideration in setting the global agenda on protected area management initiatives for the next decade.
- TL's work was influential in the inclusion of the topic of the links between cultural and biological diversity within the "Culture and Conservation" theme in the preliminary 2005-2008 program of the IUCN Commission on Environment, Economics and Social Policy (CEESP), to be submitted for discussion at the World Conservation Congress in November 2004 in Bangkok .
- In May 2003, TL President Luisa Maffi promoted biocultural diversity at the International Forum on Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health in Montréal , Canada , organized by the International Development Research Institute.
- In November 2003, Luisa Maffi delivered the endowed Cope Lecture at William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri, on the topic "On Biocultural Diversity: Transdiciplinary Thinking for Planetary Survival".
- In our continuing efforts to reach out to the general public through the media, we provided significant input into and were interviewed for several print media stories, including ones to be published in 2004 in the New York Times 's Sunday Magazine and in Audubon Magazine. We were also consulted by the producers of the Worlds of Difference radio series for National Public Radio in the development of the series, and were interviewed for a forthcoming episode. Several documentary filmmakers contacted us for input on their ideas for programs on language endangerment, linguistic and cultural diversity, indigenous peoples and the environment.

5. Organizational Development

- TL's general operations continued to be centered in our office in Washington, D.C. A major focus of activity was the revamping of our website and our newsletter Langscape. We conducted a member survey to elicit input from our existing members as to how to better serve their interests and needs, and launched an extensive new member and donations campaign.
- In October 2003, TL held its first in-person annual Board meeting in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The University of Guelph, with which Board member David Rapport was affiliated, generously provided conference room facilities for the meeting. The Board reviewed TL's mission and accomplishments and set forth plans for future development, with a focus on improving our reach to international organizations, indigenous and local communities, policy makers, funders, and the general public.