



## Urban Agenda Platform

The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

# Speaker service to promote full multicultural environmental participation

Region	Europe and Central Asia
Themes	Gender Human Rights Social Inclusion Others
Geographic scope	National
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
New Urban Agenda Commitments	Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All

## Summary

Multicultural environmental participation opens up an integrated approach bringing together social, cultural, environmental and economic dimensions. It includes the imaginative re-visioning of the bleak urban concrete jungles and streetscapes within which many ethnic minorities live against the context of the research that has established the link between mental and physical health to access to green spaces and nature where people live, work and play; the incorporation of culture and heritage as part of the telling of the environmental story to illuminate cultural presence and identity; the potential release of a vast missing contribution to environmental action that can be stimulated by environmental activities; and the capacity building associated with volunteering leading to better overall job prospects.

## Background and Objective

Black Environment Network strategically catalyses action at practical and policy levels towards full multicultural environmental participation through a speaker service, enabling the inspiration and understanding that leads to commitment and effective implementation. There is goodwill for working with socially excluded communities including multicultural urban communities, but generalised goodwill is never enough. Often it stays on paper or at the level of good intention. It must be turned into action by enabling key actors to be in touch with the realities of need and practicalities of effective implementation. Then it is powerful.

Many people know about ethnic minorities and others know about environmental participation, but until Black Environment Network elaborated the field of multicultural environmental participation, most people did not realise the potential and significance of a culture-informed approach to environmental action, benefiting the quality of life of some of our most disadvantaged communities, and unlocking their energies to make their contribution.

Multicultural environmental participation opens up an integrated approach bringing together social, cultural, environmental and economic dimensions. It includes the imaginative re-visioning of the bleak urban concrete jungles and streetscapes within which many ethnic minorities live against the context of the research that has established the link between mental and physical health to access to green spaces and nature where people live, work and play; the incorporation of culture and heritage as part of the telling of the environmental story to illuminate cultural presence and identity; the potential release of a vast missing contribution to environmental action that can be stimulated by environmental activities; and the capacity building associated with volunteering leading to better overall job prospects.

Moreover, in the context of the much needed worldwide collaboration to avert Climate Change, working with ethnic minorities in our cities enable mainstream personnel to acquire the intercultural skills essential to negotiations and joint working across the world.

Black Environment Network is positioned as a catalyst for actions for full multicultural environmental participation. BEN influences actions for inclusive environmental participation nationally and internationally by situating the theme within wider debates and narratives.



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## Outline of activities over the last four years

The speaker service included giving keynotes, speaking, and participating on discussion panels. Our work has consistently attracted international attention because it is replicable. For example, the development of the approach to multicultural environment participation in South Africa was initially based on the BEN model. Alongside this we participate in roundtables, give lectures, and work with media. In 2021 there were 4 keynotes, 27 speaker engagements, 4 panels, and 2 lectures.

## Outcomes and Impacts

We are focused on the promotion of multicultural environmental participation, which is an important multi-faceted element of the NUA. The many dimensions of this work has been built up across decades and continues to evolve. We are catalysing others to take up the work and to work more effectively. We do not have a direct way of monitoring this. However, the number of requests demonstrate the level of interest, the online resources generating as videos, podcasts and articles are significant, and the evolving content of our presentations reflect the expression of needs in a continuing conversation.

Our immediate indicators are framed within how many speaker appointments we have and the range of organisations represented give us our overview of our arena of influence. Alongside this, there are follow up conversations with policy makers, organisations and individuals. We also identify policy elements carrying the themes we highlight, for example the highlighting of attention to urban environmental provision and diversity, equality and inclusion in the latest Green Infrastructure Standards publishes by Natural England. Requests for advisory roles in implementation and development of policy and practice are significant indicators of developments stemming from the speaker service, for example, the invitation to participation in the National Advisory Group ( part of the Local Climate Engagement Programme) set up with the aim of providing local authorities in England with the support and impetus they need to realise the potential of widespread, high quality, inclusive local public engagement and participation in their climate decision-making, or the advisory group for UKRI The UK Research Institute, working with NERC the Natural Environment Research Council, influencing structures and themes for funding. A new funding stream is "Hidden Histories" researching the interpretation and distortion of the role of diverse communities, tracing impacts on scientific method, working towards reparation and the potential for opening up opportunities for diverse participation in the natural sciences, with impacts on the natural and built environments.

## Achievements

Our impact is demonstrated by the awards received. In 2021, our Honorary President, who undertakes the speaker service, was included on the BBC Power Women List and the Forbes list of the 100 most influential environmentalists in the UK, and was given the Vanity Fair International Challenger Award and the Earth Day Green Plaque Award. An indicator of the success of the service is the continual request for our speaker service.

The outcomes are

1. Heightened profile of multicultural environmental participation as a working theme.
2. Increased commitment to multicultural environmental participation within the work programmes of environment-related organisations
3. Increased understanding of methodologies to implement multicultural environmental participation,
4. Increased cross-sector connections through BEN's promotion of an integrated approach to environmental participation, bringing together social, cultural, environmental and economic concerns.

## Partners

BEN runs this service independently, working with other organisations as appropriate to shape the content of the speaking appointment. The talks come to life through the storytelling of exemplar projects identified through the years.