



A woman peeps through a window in Madagascar, 2008. Photo: UN-Habitat

3.10.2016 – The need for adequate housing is growing fast. Around one quarter of the world’s urban population continues to live in slums and informal settlements and an increasing number are living in precarious conditions. Globally, a billion new houses are needed by 2025 to accommodate 50 million new urban dwellers per year.

“Housing at the Centre” is the theme chosen to stress the urgency of the state of housing on 2016’s [World Habitat Day](#) . Held on the first Monday of every October since 1986, World Habitat Day carries extra significance in heralding the official beginning of [Urban October](#)

- a time of raising awareness, promoting participation, generating knowledge and engaging the international community on sustainable urban development. The purpose of World Habitat Day and Urban October is to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns.

Recognised as part of the right to an acceptable standard of living in the 1948 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

, adequate housing means more than four walls and a roof; specific conditions, including habitability, security of tenure and affordability, must be met before particular forms of shelter can be considered as “adequate housing”. Enhancing community cohesion and safety is another key tenet of World Habitat Day 2016.



Edinburgh Council is part of the Co-operative Council Innovations Network. Photo: Flickr/Raphaël Chekroun

One exciting area of possibility lies in the development of co-operatives, for example Edinburgh Council having supported the establishment of co-ops in the city since joining the [Co-operative Council Innovation Network](#)

. Co-operatives are autonomous associations of people united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs through jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Housing co-operatives can be a way to achieve the requisites of adequate housing, by fostering community, offering affordable rents and taking responsibility for the living environment. As Ariel Guarco, President of the

[Co-operative Confederation of Argentina](#)

(COOPERAR) said at the UN in July, “a cooperative does not have to be convinced to be socially responsible. A cooperative is social responsibility in enterprise form. This is why we are optimistic about our ability to contribute to sustainable development. Our values and our practices make us predisposed to do so.”



[Sustainable](#) [cities and communities](#) [Development](#) [Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable](#)



IMAGE: UNHabitat