

My name is Ernestina Coast and I am one of the researchers involved in the households project. This project involves a team of 11 researchers from Burkina Faso, France, Senegal, Uganda and the UK. We'd like to thank you for finding the time to take part in this online conference.

I'd like to introduce the research that we have been doing and explain the motivation behind it.

We are a multi-disciplinary team of demographers, geographers, and sociologists who have not only done secondary analyses with household survey and census data collected by others, but have also been involved in collecting household data ourselves. Team members produce both quantitative and qualitative data.

As a result of our different experiences of working with household data, we began to think about what this thing called a "household" means for the study of intergenerational relationships in a range of different settings. Our research deals with different continents, countries, contexts and linguistic traditions.

Why does this research matter?

We know how important household surveys are for the production of information for policy design and planning interventions in all countries. For example, more than half of the MDG indicators use data produced by household surveys.

However, little attention is paid by the commissioners and consumers of household data to the issue of what the household unit is, and what this means for many issues, one example of which is our understanding of intergenerational relations.

That is, the exchange of care and support between or across different generations, for example, from grandparents to grandchildren or between younger and older neighbours.

Intergenerational care is important in every context, regardless of country.

Much conventional household data are inadequate at reflecting the reality of intergenerational care and support.

It's probably worth highlighting what we do not set out to do with this research.

We do not set out to redefine the household. Given the heterogeneity of human societies it is unlikely and undesirable that one definition will fit all situations.

Nor do we propose that the household be abandoned in favour of the family. Most social science disciplines are clear that household and family are distinct.

We have used several methods to look at how different people understand and use the concept of the household to examine intergenerational relations, including document reviews, in-depth case studies, and key informant interviews.

If you want to find out more about our research methods, please take a look at our project website, [www.householdsurvey.info](http://www.householdsurvey.info).

The purpose of this online conference is to get your reaction to some of our key findings.

Because we know that your time is limited, the two issues that we would particularly like to discuss during this online conference are:

Firstly, is comparability the most important aspect of household data collection or is it more important that household data should be able to well represent diverse households and living arrangements.

Secondly, if you want to understand intergenerational relations, whether households are a useless unit of data collection, measurement and analysis.

If you would like to find out more, there are copies of our research presentations and papers on our project website, but we don't expect you to read them as part of this online conference

We're looking forward to your reactions to our findings, and to discussing our work with you during of this online conference.

Thank you.