

## JESSICA L. ESCOBAR-ALEGRÍA, PhD MS

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### CAREER GOAL

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To develop innovative approaches to research-informed initiatives that aim to reduce poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, hunger, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, obesity, and non-communicable diseases, and to advance sustainable global health and human development.

### EDUCATION

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**PhD** University of South Carolina, Arnold School of Public Health, Columbia, SC.  
Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, 2016.

**Committee chair: Edward Frongillo.**

Dissertation: Sustainability of food and nutrition security policies during presidential transitions: Integrating socio-political and nutritional sciences.

My research addressed the obstacles for collaboration during presidential transitions that advocates, community stakeholders, and program managers experience at implementing long-term policies and programs. I focused on sustainability of food and nutrition security policy (FNSP) for which long-term processes are imperative to exert impact. I examined how policy actors define sustainability and what mechanisms explain sustainability. I used a grounded-theory approach for a case study in Guatemala and applied purposeful techniques to sample policy actors. Semi-structured interview data were coded, and triangulated using news, speeches, and documents. Policy actors defined sustainability differently in the context of specific interventions. Data revealed 24 forces determining sustainability during transitions. This knowledge will inform better understanding of transitions when supporting program managers and allies to effectively reach long-term policy goals for reducing and preventing food and nutrition insecurity, and all forms of malnutrition.

**MS** Cornell University, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Ithaca, NY.  
International Nutrition and Epidemiology, 2004.

**Committee chair: Michael Latham.**

Thesis: Characteristics associated with feeding and nutritional status of children in El Salvador: A cross-sectional study in rural communities targeted by the strategy of Integral Nutrition Assistance (AIN).

**BS** Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador, San Salvador.  
Nutrition and Dietetics, 1998.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### POSITIONS

**Research Associate**, University of South Carolina, USA, January 2017- present

**Supervisor: Edward Frongillo.**

- Development of grant applications on topics of research and evaluation in Public Nutrition and Health, and to support the coordination of Global Health initiatives in the Arnold School of Public Health.
- Feeding America senior hunger initiative program evaluation
- Design of the external evaluation of Alive & Thrive's India program

**Graduate Assistant**, University of South Carolina, USA, 2011- 2016.

**Supervisor: Edward Frongillo.**

- Quantitative data analysis of baseline data for the Food Insecurity and Women's Interagency HIV study.
- Qualitative data analysis for:
  - Eat Smart Move More program, South Carolina Department of Health
  - USDA RIDGE program on experiences of hunger by children of Hispanic food insecure families in South Carolina.

**Consultant**, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), India, January–June 2016.

**Partnerships and opportunities to strengthen and harmonize actions for nutrition in India (POSHAN) external evaluation.**

- Designed and implemented the external evaluation, completed qualitative data collection, data analysis, and report

**Consultant**, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Guatemala, 2013.

**Understanding program participation, compliance, and discontinuance in the context of a Title II food aid program in rural Guatemala.**

- Completed research design and methods, quantitative data analysis, and report.

**Technical Officer on Nutrition**, World Food Program, El Salvador, 2006-2010.

- Coordinated the nutrition surveillance system update proposal: diagnosis, multisectoral collaboration, development of technical documents, contributed to the development of an online system for data analysis, training of personnel, validation, departmental implementation in La Libertad, funding, advocacy, and reports.
- Coordinated the technical team for the HIV/AIDS and nutrition guidelines update.
- Collaborated with United Nations' technical teams: UNAIDS, food and nutrition security, school feeding, micronutrients, and impact evaluation of the nutritional component of emergency response operations.

**Technical Officer on Nutrition**, Ministry of Health, El Salvador, 2004-2006.

- Provided technical assistance on nutrition at the central level for the national implementation and monitoring of the nutrition program on breastfeeding, complementary feeding, baby-friendly initiatives, and rural nutrition centers.

- Carried out across-programs' tasks on planning, multilevel and multisectoral coordination, collaboration, training of personnel, budgeting, reporting, and design of technical documents, including national guidelines and adaptation of global strategies.

**Technical Officer**, Nutrition Unit of the Pan American Health Organization, USA, 2003-2004.

- Provided technical assistance on nutrition for:
  - The supplementary program targeting the internally displaced population in Colombia.
  - The Process for the Promotion of Child Feeding (PROPAN).
  - The impact and process evaluation of the national food and nutrition program of Ecuador (PANN 2000).

### **COLLABORATIONS**

**Collaborator**, Micronutrient Initiative, Canada, 2011.

#### **Internal evaluation.**

- Completed qualitative data collection, and data preparation for analysis.

**Collaborator**, World Health Organization, and Pan American Health Organization, 2006 Barbados, 2007 Bolivia, and 2009 Ecuador.

#### **Implementation of the new WHO child growth standards.**

- Facilitated the training of trainers' course on child growth assessment using the new WHO child growth standards.
- Translated to Spanish the training course materials

**Consultant**, Ministry of Health and USAID, El Salvador, 2002.

#### **Baseline study of the integral nutrition assistance (AIN) and micronutrient strategy.**

- Completed research design and methods, quantitative and qualitative data collection, data analysis, and report.

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**Guest Lecturer**, University of South Carolina, 2011-2017.

Lectured on the topics: program evaluation, responding to global health challenges, graduate research seminar, global health and nutrition research, and qualitative research methods.

**Thesis advisor**, Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador, 2006.

Nutritional status and schooling performance of first graders in rural San Salvador.

**Teacher Assistant**, Cornell University, 2001-2003.

Assisted professor on course syllabus, course development, instruction, grading and office hours for the courses: Maternal and child nutrition, Sports nutrition, and Obesity theories.

**Course Instructor**, School of Nutrition, Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador, 1999.

Developed syllabus' technical content and delivered instruction for the course Dietetics II.

### **PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS**

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Lutter, C. K., Rodríguez, A., Fuenmayor, G., Avila, L., Sempertegui, F. & Escobar, J. 2008.  
Growth and micronutrient status in children receiving a fortified complementary

food. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 138(2), 379-388.

## MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

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Kartika Palar, PhD, Edward A. Frongillo, PhD, **Jessica Escobar PhD MS**, Lila A. Sheira, MPH, Tracey E. Wilson, PhD, Adebola Adedimeji, PhD, MPH, MBA, Daniel Merenstein, MD, Mardge H. Cohen, MD, Eryka L. Wentz, Adaora A. Adimora, MD, Ighovwerha Ofotokun, MD, Lisa Metsch, PhD, Phyllis Tien, MD, Janet M. Turan, PhD, MPH, Sheri D. Weiser, MD, MPH. Food insecurity is associated with internalized stigma and depressive symptoms among women with HIV in the United States (Submitted to the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, November 2016)

Frongillo EA, **Escobar JL**, Palar K, Wilson T, Merenstein D, Cohen M, Adedimeji A, Wentz E, Kushel MB, Tien P, Weiser SD. Association of food insecurity and food assistance with dietary intake, antiretroviral adherence, and health outcomes in HIV-infected women.

**Escobar, J.**, Frongillo, E., Blake, C., Walker, L., & McDermott, G. Implications of Terminal Logic Behavior and the Logic of Strategic Defection during Presidential Transitions for Sustainability of Food and Nutrition Security Policy.

**Escobar, J.**, Frongillo, E., Blake, C., Walker, L., & McDermott, G. Sustainability of Food and Nutrition Security Policy during Presidential Transitions.

**Escobar, J.**, Frongillo, E., Blake, C., Walker, L., & McDermott G. Perspectives of country actors on sustainability of food and nutrition security policies across presidential transitions.

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS TO WHICH I HAVE CONTRIBUTED

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Céspedes, A., Lechtig, A., Francischi, R., Lovón, M. & Hernández, G. 2010. Nutritional Dimension of the Social Safety Nets in Central America and the Dominican Republic. World Food Programme. Regional Office for Latin America and The Caribbean.

Lutter, C., Sempértegui, F., Rodríguez, A., Fuenmayor, G., Ávila, L., Madero, J., **Escobar, J.** 2007. National Feeding and Nutrition Program PANN 2000: Impact and Process Evaluation. Pan American Health Organization: Washington DC, 2007.

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). ProPAN: Process for the Promotion of Child Feeding. Washington DC, 2003.

## PRESENTATIONS

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Palar K, Frongillo EA, **Escobar J**, Tien P, Turan J, Wilson T, Merenstein D, Adedimeji A, Cohen M, Waddell E, Weiser SD. Food insecurity is associated with internalized stigma among women with HIV in the United States. AIDS Conference, South Africa 2016 (poster).

Frongillo, E.A., **Escobar, J.L.**, Palar, K., Sheira L, Wilson, T., Merenstein, D., Cohen, M., Adedimeji, A., Wentz, E., Kushel, M.B., Tien, P., Weiser, S.D. Association of food

insecurity and food assistance with dietary intake, antiretroviral adherence, and health outcomes in HIV-infected women. 11th Conference on HIV treatment and Prevention Adherence, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, 2016 (poster).

**Jessica Escobar Alegría**, Edward A Frongillo, Christine E Blake, Lee D Walker, Gerald A McDermott. Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior; Sonoco International Business, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC; Social and Political Sciences National Science Foundation. Implications of Terminal Logic Behavior and the Logic of Strategic Defection during Presidential Transitions for Sustainability of Food and Nutrition Security Policy. The American Society for Nutrition, San Diego, CA, 2016 (poster).

**Jessica Escobar Alegría**<sup>1</sup>, Edward A Frongillo<sup>1</sup>, Christine E Blake<sup>1</sup>, Lee D Walker<sup>2</sup>, Gerald A McDermott<sup>3</sup>. Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior<sup>1</sup>; Sonoco International Business<sup>3</sup>, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC; Social and Political Sciences National Science Foundation<sup>2</sup>. Sustainability of Food and Nutrition Security Policy during Presidential Transitions. The American Society for Nutrition, Boston, MA, 2015 (oral).

**Jessica Escobar Alegría**<sup>1</sup>, Edward A Frongillo<sup>1</sup>, Christine E Blake<sup>1</sup>, Lee D Walker<sup>2</sup>, Gerald A McDermott<sup>3</sup>. Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior<sup>1</sup>; Political Science<sup>2</sup>, Sonoco International Business<sup>3</sup>, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Perspectives of country actors on sustainability of food and nutrition security policies across presidential transitions. The American Society for Nutrition, San Diego, CA, 2014 (poster).

**Jessica Escobar Alegría**, Edward A Frongillo. Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Sustainability of food-security policies during presidential transitions: Framework integrating socio-political and nutritional sciences. The American Society for Nutrition, Boston, MA, 2013 (poster).

C.K. Lutter<sup>1</sup>, R. Mir<sup>2</sup>, H. Pachón<sup>3</sup>, E. Cheung<sup>4</sup>, K. Sullivan<sup>3</sup>, H. Creed de Kanashiro<sup>5</sup>, A. Panjwani<sup>1</sup>, **J. Escobar**<sup>6</sup>, K. Alam<sup>7</sup>, C. Lombardi<sup>1</sup>. PAHO/WHO, Washington DC<sup>1</sup>; Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health, Atlanta, GA<sup>3</sup>; US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta GA<sup>2</sup>; UNICEF<sup>4</sup>, NY; Instituto de Investigación Nutricional, Lima, Peru<sup>5</sup>; University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC<sup>6</sup>; Recruiting Minds, NJ<sup>7</sup>. ProPAN 2.0 (Process for the Promotion of Child Feeding): a Tool for Infant and Young Child Feeding Programming. The American Society for Nutrition, Boston, MA, 2013 (poster).

**Jessica Escobar Alegría**<sup>1</sup>, Edward A Frongillo<sup>1</sup>, Maryah S Fram<sup>2</sup>, Melly Pérez-Garay<sup>1</sup>, Mark M Macaуда<sup>1</sup>, Deborah L Billings<sup>1</sup>, Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior<sup>1</sup>, Social Work<sup>2</sup>, University of South Carolina Columbia, SC. Parents are not fully knowledgeable of their children's experiences of food-insecurity. The American Society for Nutrition, San Diego, CA, 2012 (oral).

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION AND FORMAL TRAINING**

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- Public health nutrition, health communications, grant writing, program planning and participatory research approach, social and physical environment interventions in health promotion, impact and process evaluation, health disparities, measurement methods, qualitative research, advocacy and policy, government and politics. University of South Carolina, 2011-2013.
- Graduate level teaching. University of South Carolina (course GRAD 800), 2011.
- Nutrition leadership. Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP) and Instituto de Nutrición y Tecnología de los Alimentos (INTA), 2009.
- Programs of prevention and treatment of maternal and infant undernutrition. INTA and World Food Program (WFP), 2009.
- Trainer of trainers for the use of the new child growth standards, World Health Organization, 2006.
- External evaluator Baby Friendly Initiatives, World Health Organization and UNICEF, 2005.

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

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- American Society for Nutrition.
- Junta de Vigilancia Médica de El Salvador.
- Asociación de Nutricionistas y Dietistas de El Salvador.

## **GRANTS AND FUNDING**

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### **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

- Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, Arnold School of Public Health: travel award 2016-2012; tuition 2015, 2013-2012; and Arnold's Fellowship 2011.
- Provost funds for doctoral dissertation research, 2014.
- Graduate school travel grant for conferences 2016, 2014-2012.

### **GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG**

As a technical officer on nutrition representing the World Food Program and in Collaboration with the Ministry of Health of El Salvador: nutrition surveillance 2007-2010.

### **UNICEF**

As a technical officer on nutrition representing the Ministry of Health of El Salvador: promotion protection, and support of breastfeeding 2004-2006.

### **CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

- Cornell Graduate School travel grant for scientific meetings, 2003.
- Division of Nutritional Sciences Research grant, 2002.

## **SKILLS**

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### **COMPUTER SKILLS**

Quantitative data analysis software Stata and SPSS, QSR qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 10, MSWord, MSEXcel, MSPowerPoint, and ANTHRO WHO 2005.

## LANGUAGES

Spanish and English

## OTHER SKILLS

- **Leading for products delivery:** performs fast-paced work independently, and organized to achieving outcomes, finding direction, developing logistics, and dealing with pressure.
- **Enhancing teamwork:** promotes effective relationships at working with stakeholders, deals with conflicts constructively, and identifies mechanisms for effectively leading teamwork, including attention to detail and follow through.
- **Building partnerships:** effectively identifies capabilities and team members needed, negotiates and promotes synergies within own institution and with key partners.
- **Ethics:** performs work according high integrity standards.

## SERVICE

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- Girls on the Run, Columbia SC. 2014-present.
  - The Catholic Charities of the Midlands, Columbia SC. 2012-present.
  - The Hispanic Ministry of St. Peters Catholic Church, Columbia SC. 2014-present.
  - The Charities Ministry serving elderly men and HIV positive children of the Carmelite Parish, San Salvador, El Salvador. 2004-2010
  - The Cornell University Eucharistic Ministry visiting elderly homes, Ithaca NY. 2002-2003.
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