

# Scott Chamberlin | Sample Blog Posts

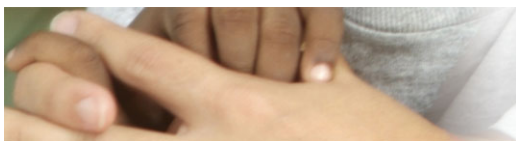
## Whole Child International

*Scott Chamberlin wrote nearly all of the communications material for Whole Child International between 2005 and 2019, including digital and printed materials. The attached are some selections from Whole Child International's 15-year-old blog for browsing.*

*Tone: careful, highly accessible, assuming no prior knowledge*

---

### Notes from the Field



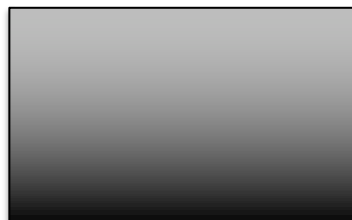
### Updates from the Staff of Whole Child International

## Gary Newton Joins Whole Child International as Senior Director for Policy

by [wholechild](#) | Aug 12, 2017 | [English](#)

Whole Child International is pleased to announce that Gary Newton has joined our team as Senior Director for Policy. Gary will lead the development of a policy framework to guide our programmatic and geographic expansion.

Whole Child International occupies a niche within the international development community: we focus on the needs and plight of poor and vulnerable children stuck in institutions. While awaiting placement in families, children have the right to the best care possible within the well-known constraints of the institutional setting. Whole Child promotes changes in procedure and practice that improve the quality of caregiving, strengthen attachments, and enrich the emotional environment for children. Whole Child does not promote the institutionalization of children. We help prepare children who live in institutions to live within families.



*Gary Newton*

Whole Child has implemented programs in residential and early childcare settings in Central America – a challenging care environment due to limited resources, widespread displacement, pervasive poverty, and some of the world's highest rates of violence.

Whole Child is on the cusp of modest growth. Over the next five years, Whole Child will build on thirteen years' experience working with governments and within the residential care sector to support transitions from institutional to family-based care. We will work on transitions with new partners in Africa and Asia and current partners in Central America. As we expand into family-based care, we will continue our focus on sustainability, increasing government capacity, and leveraging existing alternative care resources to create change.

Gary will consult widely with colleagues in the sector to ensure our policies and programs complement those of our partners and contribute to the global goal of ensuring that as many children as possible are cared for in a family, whether it be their own or an alternative.

Gary served as a Foreign Service Officer with USAID for 25 years, including 16 years in Africa. His positions included USAID Director in Namibia and U.S. Government Special Advisor for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. He teaches a course on vulnerable children at Georgetown University at the School of Foreign Service in the Global Human Development Program, and serves on the board of three organizations that focus on child welfare and protection and public health.

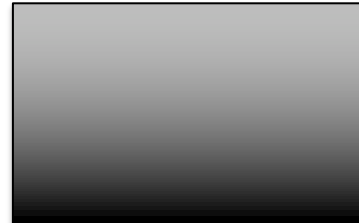
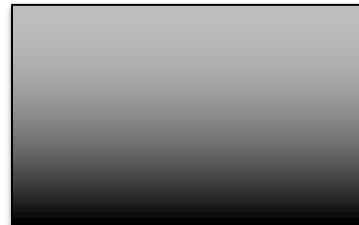
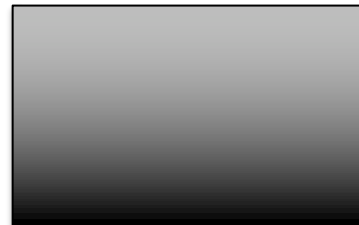
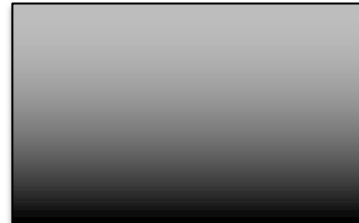
## What's Inspiring Our Team This Week?

by [wholechild](#) | Jul 14, 2017 | [English](#)

Working for sustainability is hard. Many times we would love to go into a childcare center and fix everything all at once, but it's essential to go slowly with our partners and make sure they know the why and the how of the practices and principles that we recommend.

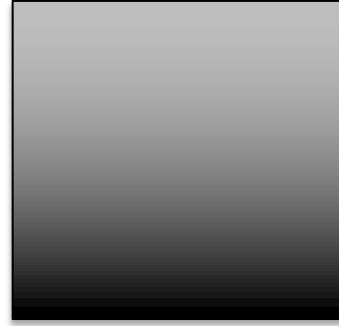
Some days, this process seems like it will take a very long time. And then there are the days it all clicks. Today, in a visit to one of the childcare centers in the heart of San Salvador, on the edge of one of the largest markets and in an area with strong gang presence, it clicked! This childcare center unfortunately does not have any green area, and for security reasons the children must stay indoors nearly all day. Working with caregivers to make the childcare experience full of joy, discovery, and fun in these conditions has been a challenge, but the caregivers have worked tirelessly with our technical team, learning new strategies for positive reorientation and ways to communicate and interact with the kids.

After reaching a number of quality benchmarks, [through the generosity of the Mawardi Foundation](#), we were able to introduce new toys and materials into this center. While the space for the older kids was instantly transformed, the space for the babies was harder to implement. The caregivers have been cautious about creating an environment where children under one year old could be on the floor, moving and playing, while the caregivers were elsewhere in the room. But today when we walked in for



technical assistance we found a new kind of quiet filled with the sounds of children discovering, playing, and interacting. The caregivers were moving around doing necessary tasks, pausing constantly to marvel at their charges who could now set new challenges for themselves and achieve those successes.

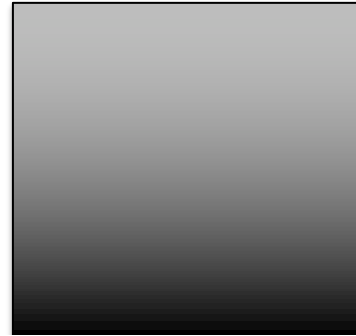
Pictures from that visit are up on our office bulletin board in El Salvador as our inspiration this week!



## A Visit from Ethnographer Tomas Matza

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 20, 2017 | [English](#)

From the beginning, Whole Child International has dedicated significant time, resources, and funding to doing research and evaluation of the work that we do. This has been essential to demonstrate results and impact, but it also guides our program development. For instance, if we find that some results are not as effective or as well sustained as we had hoped, through evaluation we can carefully analyze and pull apart the pieces of our program to determine where we need to grow further.



As part of our research in El Salvador, [Dr. Tomas Matza, an anthropologist and ethnographer from the University of Pittsburgh](#), has been providing invaluable insight into the caregiver experience prior to,

*Dr. Tomas Matza*

throughout, and after our work improving the quality of care in their centers. We work intensively with the caregivers, providing them training followed by on-site hands-on coaching and mentoring in applying what they have learned, so it's invaluable to carefully understand what helps the caregivers — and therefore the lives of the children they care for.

Tomas [first visited in June 2015](#), and he is back in-country working with the team of local ethnographers as part of the post-intervention assessment. He is also meeting with government officials to learn more about their experience in [our university certificate program](#), and how this has changed their perspective and practice. We are looking forward to the new insights gained from this process.

## Assessing Our Progress in El Salvador

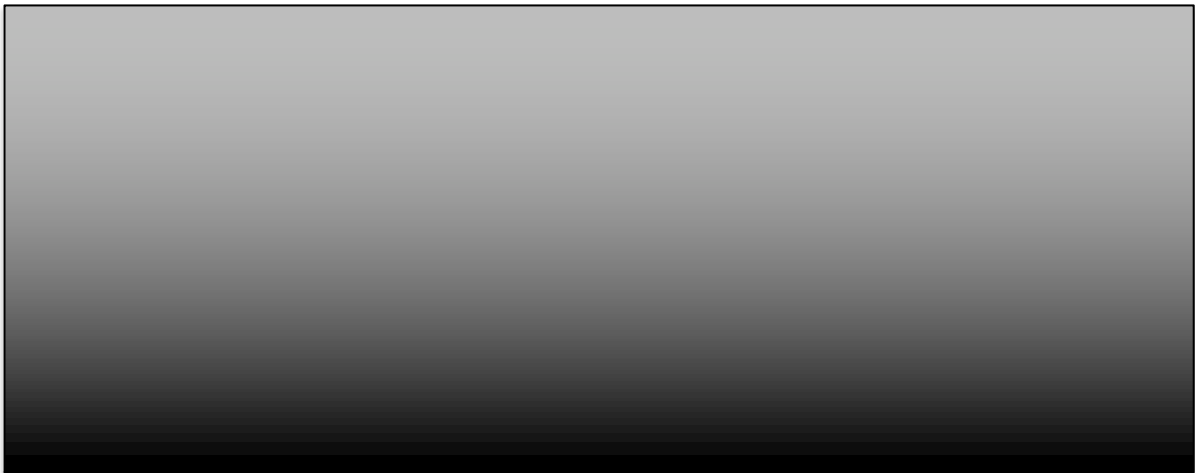
by [wholechild](#) | Jun 6, 2017 | [English](#)

Last week, Founder & CEO Karen Spencer and other U.S.-based [staff](#) joined our El Salvador team to visit all corners of El Salvador and assess the progress of the work we have been conducting in limited-resource childcare centers. The El Salvador team has done tremendous work in the care centers, and we're all grateful for our dedicated partners in the centers and across the Salvadoran government as we move forward with our nationwide program.

## Whole Child Begins Collaboration in China

by [wholechild](#) | Mar 31, 2017 | [English](#)

Whole Child has been thinking about how to evaluate the quality of care that children receive since the founding of the organization. This careful analysis led to a five-year



*Meghan Lopez and her One Sky colleague, Xiaomin, address the training session in China.*

process of literature review, development, testing, and expert review to develop our childcare setting quality measurement tool, WCI-QCUALS — first as a tool on paper and then developed as a smartphone application with Duke University. This month our program director, Meghan Lopez, traveled for 10 days to China to work with our colleagues at [One Sky for Children](#), who share a similar perspective on the importance of quality care and relationship centered care.

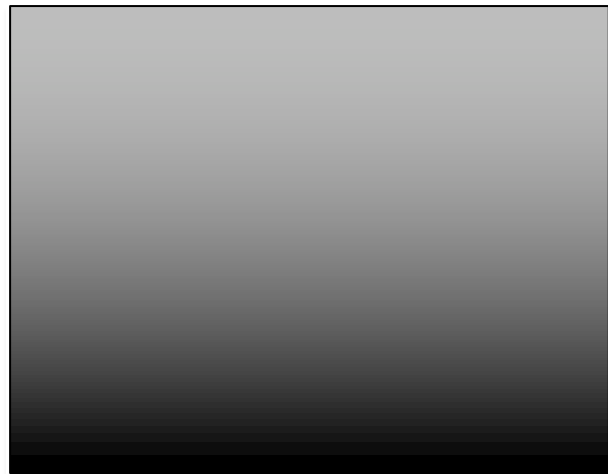
She provided a training session focused on an overview of quality in childcare through the lens of existing evidence, specifically looking at limited-resource settings. Meghan shared WCI-QCUALS and worked with One Sky staff to pilot its use.

One of our goals in this partnership is to learn as partners at One Sky use WCI-QCUALS to evaluate their orphanages, childcare programs, and foster care services, in China. From the thoughtful questions during training and the on-site practice assessments, it was exciting to share experiences with our talented colleagues there and to support the important work they do for vulnerable children.

## First Caregiver Trainees Graduate in El Salvador

by [wholechild](#) | Nov 23, 2016 | [English](#)

Whole Child's El Salvador team graduated its first group of 54 caregivers of Salvadoran orphanages and childcare centers on November 18. The caregivers completed eight months of arduous effort and learning in our first monthly workshops on "Improving Practices for Childcare in Groups," which is the fourth stage in our process which aims to improve the quality of childcare across the country. Whole Child is joined in this effort by the Salvadoran government's Institute for



Children and Adolescents (ISNA), supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Korean Poverty Reduction Found (KPR). The workshop was a collaboration of experts in integral child development from ISNA, government supervisors, as well as directors and caregivers from nine centers dedicated to childcare in El Salvador.

The workshops covered multiple topics around care and well-being of children, including communication with children, establishing routines in care, establishing a bond with children through everyday activities, the creation of safe and welcoming spaces, observation and child development support.

Each session included reflection and discussions regarding practices and participant experiences. After each session, the Whole Child team provided the caregivers in each center with hands-on support and coaching. We want to thank all 54 caregivers who participated in and learned through these workshops; honoring the commitment, effort, and willpower to make a difference in the life of these children.

## Outfitting Childcare Centers with Furniture, Toys, and Materials that Improve Care

by [wholechild](#) | Nov 14, 2016 | [English](#)

On Friday, November 11, we celebrated an important activity in the process of the improvement of quality care in the pilot childcare centers that are the focus of [our intervention](#) right now. Our team adapted spaces for children and their caregivers, and put in place furniture, toys, and materials to support the development of Salvadoran boys and girls who are being raised in limited-resource orphanages and other care settings. This effort reinforced what the caregivers learned during the workshops, and the coaching they had received throughout an eight-month period. In total, nine Salvadoran pilot centers benefited from this project.



We installed the toys and materials in the presence of representatives of the Salvadoran government's Institute for Children and Adolescents (ISNA), community leaders, caregivers, and families. Watching the happiness and enthusiasm of the children with new toys and play spaces was gratifying and joyous for the adults as well.

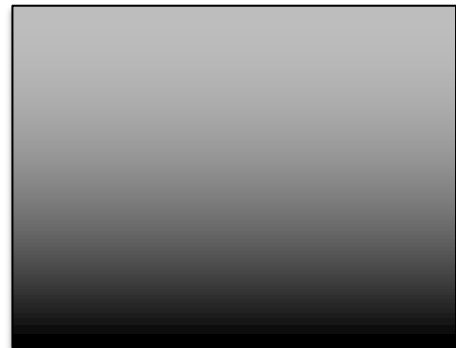
This effort has been made possible thanks to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Korean Poverty Reduction Fund, and

through the support of the Youssef and Kamel Mawardi Fund. It's a pilot effort we'll be following in many of the other care centers across El Salvador and beyond, so it's been carefully documented for replication on larger scales.

### Four Solutions for Better Care: Whole Child Founder Karen Spencer with NBC's Cynthia McFadden

by [wholechild](#) | Aug 19, 2016 | [English](#)

This April, Whole Child's founder Karen Spencer spoke with NBC's Cynthia McFadden while filming our recent "Dateline: On Assignment" segment. NBC released



this extra-special short feature outlining four of Whole Child's ways to help improve outcomes for children growing up in orphanages.

Please take a look, and read more on our [Vision](#) page!

## Beginning a New Program with El Salvador's Ministry of Education

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 23, 2016 | [English](#)

This Saturday, June 25, Whole Child International will launch a new effort in El Salvador in coordination with the Ministry of Education and our partners at the [University of Central America](#) in San Salvador. The program will build upon our existing work in children's institutions and limited-resource care settings to improve the quality of early childhood development, bringing the care practices at the heart of our work to more children across the country.

The Ministry of Education has asked us to coordinate their efforts in training all early-childhood teachers across El Salvador – beginning with 480 specialist early-childhood teachers and community education workers who will then be charged with training their more than 7,000 colleagues across the country. This exciting new alliance aims to strengthen the professional and social skills of public-sector teachers who currently teach early childhood education and early childhood development. It's a forward-looking, comprehensive approach to promoting the integral development of children in the country through a human-rights approach as part of a national strategy for building a culture of peace. We are proud to be part of it.

## Closing the Baseline in El Salvador

by [wholechild](#) | May 11, 2016 | [English](#)

On April 20, Whole Child International closed the baseline of our study of Salvadoran early childhood centers, meaning we have reached the first research-based "diagnosis" of a nationwide early childhood care system anywhere in Latin America!

The investigation started in March 2015 in coordination with Duke University's [Global Health Institute\(CHPIR\)](#), the [University of Central America](#) of El Salvador and the University of Pittsburgh. This process has deployed 24 psychologists in the field daily to evaluate seven orphanages and 154 childcare centers on the national level.

The evaluators have collected demographic data, measured children's physical well-being and development, monitored the well-being of caregivers, and evaluated the features of the individual centers of care. We used [WCI-OCUALS](#), the tool we developed for

measuring limited-resource care settings, which proved to be very sensitive in evaluating and monitoring early childhood care, emphasizing the interaction between caregivers and children.

The baseline has been complemented with qualitative information about the context in 20 selected centers, gathered by four ethnographers, in coordination with the University of Pittsburgh [Department of Anthropology](#).

Once the information has been analyzed, Whole Child will be able to provide the government of El Salvador a thorough and complete diagnosis of the quality of early childhood care to the most vulnerable children in the country, as an important tool for decision-making as we continue to expand our program nationwide to address the conditions found in the study.

## Launching Phase 2 of Our National Evaluation in El Salvador

by [wholechild](#) | Oct 6, 2015 | [English](#)

In El Salvador we are scaling up our national evaluation to reach the second group of government childcare centers and orphanages. We began with an initial trial set of centers known as "[Group F](#)" in May, which gave us the opportunity to fine-tune our research protocols, test our evaluation model, and validate the electronic version of our evaluation tool, [WCI-QCUALS](#).

The research model for Phase 2 is vast – in addition to using WCI-QCUALS, which assesses 10 areas key to assuring quality care, we are using a series of other tools, including the Battelle Development Index and the Child Measurement Survey to assess all aspects of child development, detect disabilities, and measure the well-being of the caregivers. Our research now also includes a home-based survey to look at the well-being of the families of children in participating childcare centers; assess for domestic violence, abuse, or other issues; and gain an understanding of beliefs about childcare, while also collecting valuable demographic information. To support our expanded research efforts, our partners at [Duke University](#), Andrew Weinhold and Morgan Barlow, traveled to San Salvador help supervise data collection and reporting. We will ultimately evaluate a total of 210 government childcare centers and orphanages nationwide in a longitudinal study which will collect data and guide our program for four full years.





Phase 2 will take our evaluation teams across El Salvador to 217 childcare centers and children's homes in all 14 departments of the country. Here members of the dedicated research team, Karen Mena, Duke University's Andrew Weinhold, Brenda Huezo, and José David Escamilla, pose midway through research in September.

## El Salvador University Course at UCA: Leading Pediatric Neurologist Illuminates the Importance of the First Five Years

by [wholechild](#) | Oct 2, 2015 | [English](#)

Our university course continues at El Salvador's University of Central America. This week, the Salvadoran officials, childcare directors, and childcare supervisors attending the course heard from Dr. Antonio Rizzoli, a leading pediatric neurologist from Mexico. With his clear passion for helping governments, communities, and caregivers understand and support healthy brain development, he described in detail how crucial the first five years of a child's life are



— a time in which the brain structure is formed and greatly impacts the rest of the child's life. In his opinion, the greatest challenge is being able to plan effective ways to support children from the very beginning, especially the first two years when 85% of the brain develops.

Dr. Rizzoli passionately advocated for assuring that technology doesn't invade our need for human interactions, described the urgency and responsibility we all have in supporting child development, and spoke to the need for children to receive the best care possible as early as possible. He highlighted the consequences of not supporting healthy attachment and meeting children's emotional needs during the first five years, and outlined major social problems later in life that affect not only the individual, but also the entire society.

His insights were highly motivating, especially for our participants who are responsible for early childhood education and child protection on a national level, and whose decisions affect the lives of thousands of children each year.

## Salvadoran Authorities Who Oversee Childcare in El Salvador Begin Our Second University Certificate Program

by [wholechild](#) | Aug 18, 2015 | [English](#)

Together with the [University of Central America](#), our team is now launching the second phase of our [training program](#) in El Salvador. The second phase is a university certificate course designed to provide the "how-to" for elevating and monitoring the quality of care provided to thousands of the country's most vulnerable children. The course, "Best Childcare Practices: Developing the Whole Child in Limited-Resource Settings," emphasizes practical techniques for implementing quality childcare.

This course is aimed at supporting authorities and field staff from the Salvadoran government's Institute for Children and Adolescents (ISNA). These are the key officials who design, implement, and oversee national early-childhood programming and supervise 210 childcare centers and orphanages. Together they are responsible for day-to-day care during one of the most vulnerable stages of children's lives. Their programs will help determine whether this generation of Salvadorans will have the opportunity to develop to its full potential, or not.

Our 65 course participants play a vital role in developing, managing, and implementing childcare center policies that affect thousands of children's lives each day. From how children acquire language skills to their emotional well-being, the care their centers provide directly impacts every aspect of child development. Look for more posts on how the graduates of the [first-phase university course](#), as "Agents of Change," will support the participants in our second training program.

## Government Officials Complete El Salvador's First-Ever University Certificate Course in Childcare Management

by [wholechild](#) | Jul 30, 2015 | [English](#)

Whole Child is especially proud to announce that after five months of learning about best childcare practices and sharing their experiences and perspectives, 72 government officials from 10 different institutions graduated from the first university certificate course in childcare management in El Salvador, which we provided through the University of Central America.



It's important to recognize the commitment of the El Salvadoran government which facilitated high-level officials from 10 different institutions to spend one day a week for five months offsite, attending this unprecedented university course. We also thank the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Korean Poverty Reduction Fund, and the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency of El Salvador for making the course possible.

Participants received their diplomas in the presence of Korean Ambassador to El Salvador Mr. Kim Byong-seop; Ms. María Deni Sánchez of the IDB; Ms. Elda Tobar, Director of El Salvador's Institute for Integral Development for Children and Adolescents (ISNA); and other representatives of the government of El Salvador.

[read more...](#)

## Using Coaching to Support Nationwide Change

by [wholechild](#) | Jul 24, 2015 | [English](#)

*"Good coaching creates new ideas for addressing problems and enhances creativity—it inspires the mind and encourages the heart" – [Schuster Kane Alliance](#)*

As an organization focused on [training](#) and [organizational change on multiple levels](#), one of Whole Child's most important tools is professional coaching. This unique focus is an empowering means for helping all program recipients, from policy-makers to direct caregivers, learn how to improve childcare and meet vulnerable children's social and emotional needs — by proactively supporting problem solving at all levels as a first step in effective collaboration.

In El Salvador, as part of our university course for government officials who are key decision-makers in early childhood, Whole Child's board member and coaching

expert [John Schuster](#) taught this week's course, sharing a range of techniques in both coaching and interpersonal communication.

Throughout the course, while also updating knowledge on early childhood development, we strive to help bridge the gap between current ingrained practices that cause harm and delay children's development with the practices that support children's physical, cognitive, linguistic and social emotional development. By helping government officials gain coaching skills we are helping them be catalysts of change to improve childcare policies, practices, and programs and we assure that decision-makers have effective tools to empower their staff to make radical changes.

Just as the current training program is empowering government-level decision-makers, the next level of training will serve to empower childcare center and orphanage directors to promote changes among caregivers. This approach is key for Whole Child as we strive to maximize impact and keep costs down ensuring that the greatest impact gets to our beneficiaries. To accomplish this, John shared these inspiring words of Robert F. Kennedy:

*"Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. [...] It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped."*

## Bringing the Latest Evaluation Tools to El Salvador

by [wholechild](#) | Jul 9, 2015 | [English](#)

How can policymakers and early-childhood programs measure childcare effectively given the budget, time, and data constraints that most governments and childcare facilities face? It is a tricky challenge for most countries. This week Whole Child International is joined by our partner and colleague, Dr. [Kate Whetten](#), in El Salvador to share her insights on how to implement practical and cost-effective evaluation methodologies in our [university certificate program on childcare management](#). As this program's participants continue to develop skills to be agents of change for quality childcare, they have had the opportunity to explore firsthand how the quality of childcare can be measured and quantified for ongoing improvements and maintaining positive changes. In addition, the national early childhood and child protection officials in attendance took full advantage of her policy experience in less wealthy countries, asking a range of critical questions. One participant reflected with the group saying "What should the result of this course be? To influence the national policies in early childhood, which is a priority for the government. However we have many institutions represented here and seeing results in national policies will be proof of what we have learned and done."



Dr. Kate Whetten and Whole Child's Gabriela Serrano address our university course on childcare management in July 2015.

As always, it is an honor to work with Kate who is part of one of the more groundbreaking studies in our field, [Positive Outcome for Orphans](#), which provided new insights on optimal and feasible care settings for orphans and abandoned children. As Director of the Center for Health Policy & Inequalities Research (CHPIR) of [Duke University](#) she also leads research on a number of cutting-edge public-health policy challenges. Her knowledge and experience have deeply informed the [groundbreaking national study](#) that we are currently implementing with the government of El Salvador and Duke University on the quality of childcare, and they should be a continual inspiration for our program participants and the evaluating team she is helping supervise.

## Taking a Closer Look at How Communities View Vulnerable Children

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 26, 2015 | [English](#)

How are vulnerable children cared for? This is one of the questions Whole Child is exploring in El Salvador as part of [our national study](#) on the current quality of childcare. To help us address this question and learn more about the cultural aspects of childcare, we hired a team of four local ethnographers to do a qualitative analysis. Marta, Grazzia, Jacqueline, and Yessenia, all with backgrounds in anthropology, are gathering information to better understand the social and cultural aspects of care in the communities where we are working. By observing the care routines (bathing, feeding, changing, etc.) and interviewing caregivers, they are discovering how both caregivers and children feel about the care being provided. They will also study the relationships between the childcare centers and orphanages and their local communities. The University of Pittsburgh's [Tomas Matza](#) is leading the team for this activity and is overseeing their fieldwork. Their study will shed light on the values and practices surrounding childcare by asking questions such as "What do children need from adults to support their full development?" In the first phase of their work, from May through July, the team will study eight centers. We will keep you posted on their progress!

The qualitative information they gather will complement quantitative data collected and insights learned from a series of evaluation tools. One of the tools we will use is [WCI-QUALS](#), which is the tool Whole Child International developed to assess the following 10 domains in low resource settings: Administration; Environment; Group Size; Continuity of Care; Primary Care Giving; Freedom of Movement; Interactions between Caregiver and Children; Attachment to Caregivers; Nutrition, Safety and Hygiene; and Security. The national study will be the first of its kind in Latin America and will help guide future childcare programming and policies in El Salvador for years to come.

## Putting Children's Rights and Interests at the Heart of Policymaking

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 24, 2015 | [English](#)

One of our most inspiring activities outside of orphanages and childcare centers is working with government officials to improve national policies and programs. Our [program](#) includes a [university certificate course](#) tailored for the government to explore evidence-based best practices for management from the perspective of their needs and roles in childcare and protection. During the course we learn from the government stakeholders' experiences and provide them with guidance on how to keep the child's best interests and their development at the heart of all decisions and policies made. Considering the complexities of legal systems, family dynamics, and ingrained practices, it's not a simple task. It is, however, vital for children's mental health and emotional stability.



*Dr. Mauricio Gaborit, Head of the Psychology Department at the University of Central America in El Salvador, presents a lecture on the impact violence has on children.*

As part of our [nationwide project in El Salvador](#) and outreach efforts in [Ecuador](#), more than 75 government officials from both countries are participating in our current university certificate course, which is in its fourth month. We have seen judges for the first time in their career reflect about how to consider a child's attachment to his caregiver in the decisions made regarding his care. The key child-development concept of attachment had never before been part of their vocabulary. Likewise, a Ministry of Health representative for the metropolitan region of San Salvador, Dr. Ricardo Santamarí, noted that learning about "neuroscience, attachment, and child-centered administrative practices not only stimulated my mind, but touched my heart."

We have seen the participants' criteria for decision-making and program design evolve and change throughout the course. The difference is knowledge — of child development, harm reduction, and a right's-based approach, among other essential topics that they walk away with for the rest of their careers. Our government partners are key to our program's success as they make life-changing decisions and manage programs that affect thousands of children's lives.

## Sharing How We Measure the Well-Being of Children with U.S. and Russian Officials

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 22, 2015 | [English](#)

Whole Child International was invited to share information on measuring the quality of childcare with U.S. and Russian experts who work with vulnerable children in a webinar funded by the U.S. Embassy to Russia as part of the [US-Russia Peer-to-Peer Dialogue Program](#).

[Stellit](#), the Russian NGO that hosted the event, provided a space for exchanging information around best practices in childcare and measuring the well-being of children who are orphaned and/or separated from their parents. It gave us the opportunity to share how our tool, [WCI-QUALS](#) (Whole Child International Quality Childcare Universal Assessment for Limited-Resource settings) measures care settings, and how we use its results to improve quality of care.

Our Program Director [Meghan Lopez](#) presented via web conference from El Salvador, explaining our integral approach for assessing quality in limited-resource settings, including orphanages. Officials in Moscow and St. Petersburg listened with simultaneous translation. Dr. [Karen O'Donnell](#) from our partner Duke University's [Center for Health Policy and Inequalities Research](#), presented about measurement with small children. Dr. [Laura Murray](#) from Johns Hopkins' [Bloomberg School of Public Health](#) spoke about the need to use short, clear measurements. They were joined by Russian speakers who shared their experience working with orphans and vulnerable children and appreciated Whole Child's experience using measurements to improve care. We look forward to a continued collaboration with these Russian and U.S. colleagues, and are pleased to find new ways to leverage the investment in our work by helping other organizations improve care and measure their progress.

## Director of LMU's Children's Center Comes to Teach in El Salvador

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 8, 2015 | [English](#), [Uncategorized](#)

Our very own [Senior Program Specialist](#), Ani Shabazian, Ph.D., has traveled from her home in Los Angeles, California all the way to El Salvador to teach in our University Course on Childcare Management. For the classes of June 5 and 6, her mission was to share with the more than 70 government officials participating in the course how to ensure childcare centers have the materials and environments that they need to support children's development. While focusing on preparing spaces and items for the children, her guidance conveys her belief that "positive, caring relationships between a child and the significant adults in his or her life are vital to quality care."



Under her leadership as Director of the Loyola Marymount University Children's Center ([LMUCC](#)), the center achieved [accreditation](#) for the second time from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which fewer than 8% of U.S. childcare centers receive. LMUCC is truly a special place for children. Ani's experience at the center and her research enabled her to help Whole Child International adapt our high-quality practices to orphanages and other limited-resource settings, and to publish our university course textbook and caregiver training materials. Her research and childcare center experience is now bringing innovative ideas to the university course participants in El Salvador, who found her insights on quality childcare pivotal. With the perspective and knowledge Ani brings to this conversation, they now have the tools to think differently about the role of the spaces and materials that adults prepare in childcare centers and the impact they have on children's cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development.

## Building Local Partnerships in Ecuador

by [wholechild](#) | Jun 3, 2015 | [English](#), [Uncategorized](#)

As we [reported late last year](#), Whole Child International has established an outreach office in Ecuador, in order to take full advantage of opportunities to establish our program to reach children in tremendous need for our work. This effort is bearing fruit, and we now have two strong local partnerships in place. Over the past month we have been working side-by-side with [Fundación Esquel](#) and [Fundación Crisfe](#) to develop programs to improve the quality of care that children receive in orphanages. It is an opportunity for Whole Child to grow and build on the [results](#) of our more than ten years of experience in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and work toward bringing our full program to Ecuador and benefit thousands of vulnerable children.

Both Esquel and Crisfe are helping make this growth possible. Together they have more than 40 years of experience supporting human and social development and vulnerable groups in Ecuador. They have made a significant impact in the lives of Ecuadorians, bringing sustainable human development programs to more than a million people.



Working with these two strong partners, we have the opportunity to share key government relationships and comprehensive operations and management infrastructures that will allow us to hit the ground running and begin working with orphanage personnel and government authorities as soon as possible.

Fundación Esquel has a rigorous and certified monitoring and evaluation program to complement the tools we have developed, such as the [WCI-QCUALS measurement tool](#),



to evaluate limited-resource childcare centers and systems of care. Their mission is to contribute to sustainable human development and improve the quality of life for Ecuadorians. Fundación Crisfe works to support vulnerable individuals and communities in their efforts to access education and improve their quality of life. Their deep knowledge and extensive experience working throughout Ecuador has helped open many windows of opportunity for us to bring our support to a new country of need. We look forward to collaborating with them for years to come.

## Whole Child Concludes Evaluations of First Set of Childcare Centers in El Salvador

by [wholechild](#) | May 29, 2015 | [English](#)

As part of our [project in El Salvador](#), Whole Child International has begun an unprecedented national study on the quality of childcare in the 210 government childcare centers and orphanages with which we are now working.

To get started, we and our [partners](#) at [Duke University](#) and the [University of Central America](#) have randomly divided these centers into six groups and have evaluated the first group, known now as "Group F." Our observation of Group F is revealing profound insights not only about the day-to-day life in the centers, but also about their staff's dedication and ongoing needs, and also about the challenges they face in running the center and managing community dynamics.

The evaluation model, which has been designed and [endorsed](#) by all our university partners, began in March 2015 with an informative meeting with caregivers and parents to explain the evaluation and request consent. Our evaluators then visited each center to apply a series of evaluation tools (WCI-QCUALS, the [Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale](#) (ECERS), and [Battelle](#)). We completed the evaluations in May and have sent the results to our Duke University colleagues to be analyzed prior to sharing with the Salvadoran government officials. In addition to learning about the quality of care in each center, we also learned more about the scope of each tool and how it evaluates quality comparatively.

For the first time, this experience has given us the opportunity to further validate the WCI-QCUALS, which is designed to evaluate limited-resource settings, as well as compare with

ECERS, a tool frequently used in the United States. Having this comparison will help us continue to standardize WCI-QUALS for its use by many kinds of organizations in similar settings around the world.

## Two ISNA Staff Members Take Up Residency in Whole Child's Office in El Salvador

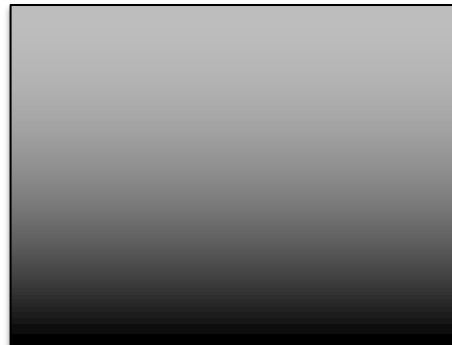
by [wholechild](#) | Feb 20, 2019 | [English](#), [Uncategorized](#)

We're moving forward on multiple fronts in our project in El Salvador. One goal we have been able to realize is the seconding of two staff members from ISNA, the Salvadoran government's Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents. These two members, Lorena Santos and Hazzel Romero, will spend two years in our office in San Salvador, where our staff of 19 can learn from them and vice-versa.

Lorena and Hazzel are technical specialists in child protection and limited-resource childcare, respectively. They will be accompanying the technical teams of early childhood care centers and protection centers in the processes of training and strengthening their skills and abilities (mentoring) related to guaranteeing quality care practices in different environments. They are also playing an important role in mapping out the child protection system in the research phase of the project.

Our project is specifically about creating capacity in the Salvadoran government to implement best practices and policies in childcare, across its system of care from residential centers to childcare centers to foster and other alternative care. So, there's nothing more effective than working as closely as possible with the permanent staff who will be guiding and implementing these practices and policies long after Whole Child has completed its work and gone to other countries of need.

*Hazzel & Lorena meet with CEO & Founder Karen Spencer, January 2019*



## The Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project (Part 1 of 5)

by [wholechild](#) | Dec 14, 2018 | [English](#), [Uncategorized](#)

*This is the first of a five-post blog series introducing Whole Child's new project in El Salvador. Today, we begin with an overview of the initiative. The next three posts will introduce you to the project's three main components. The final post in the series will be a post explaining the connection between the project and the ongoing migration crisis at the US/Mexico border.*

---

On November 13, 2018 in San Salvador, the U.S. government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Whole Child International formally launched the Protection and Quality of Care for Children project. The project, a \$7.4 million investment over five years — \$4.9 million from USAID and \$2.5 million from Whole Child International — will support the Salvadoran government to further strengthen its capacity to provide care, protection, and development for vulnerable children and their families.

The collaboration involves supporting government efforts to assess key aspects of the national child protection system including social-service workforce capacity, case management, the quality of residential care, and transitions from institutional to family-based care. Assessment results will be used to refine and implement national policies and practices to improve children's well-being and safety. Safety of children is a preeminent concern given the levels of violence in El Salvador. Through the training of care center workers and by working directly with families, the project will help ensure that children receive developmental support in safe, nurturing environments.

This is a public-sector capacity-building project focused on care reform. Whole Child has years of experience in El Salvador working in collaboration with government departments responsible for the care of vulnerable children. ISNA, the government department in charge of the "comprehensive development of children" has been and will be our main partner. We are well prepared — and honored — to continue this partnership.

Given the project's emphasis on strengthening systems and human capacity, Whole Child is expanding the range and depth of technical support available to the government under the project through an alliance with the USC School of Social Work.

The project in a nutshell focuses on an objective of fundamental importance to El Salvador: *Increased capacity of the government of El Salvador to protect and care for children most at risk of being victims or perpetrators of violence.*

Project activities are organized around three key results necessary to achieve the objective:

Strengthening systems to support children without adequate family care. This entails, among other things, supporting government efforts to assess El Salvador's deinstitutionalization experience to date, assess the quality of public and NGO residential care, and map case management and supervision.

Increasing knowledge and skills in childcare best practices in 200+ public sector Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centers and in the 30 remaining public and private sector residential care centers. This entails, among other things, training key personnel from ISNA and other government departments, training and mentoring all levels of residential care staff, and training and mentoring field supervisors who oversee care in the ECCD centers.

Institutionalizing family-based-care best practices. This entails, among other things, developing policies and protocols to enable the transformation of residential care to include family-based care; training ISNA and protection center staff on new case management practices and protocols; and piloting approaches to transition institutional care facilities to focus on family-based care.

---

*The three posts that follow in this series will go into a bit more detail on each of these three project components, and one additional post will put it into the context of the migration "crisis." ([Jump to Part 2 — "Assessing and Mapping."](#))*

## Assessing and Mapping (Part 2 of 5)

by [wholechild](#) | Dec 20, 2018 | [English](#)

*This is the second of a five-post blog series introducing our USAID-funded "Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project" exploring its three principal components, and putting it all into a wider context. (Jump back to Part 1 [here](#).)*

---

This post focuses on the first of the project's three main components: strengthening systems to support children without adequate family care.

This component focuses on supporting Salvadoran government's efforts to take stock of its efforts to date to care for, protect, and promote the healthy development of the country's most vulnerable children. The results of this assessment will be used to refine care and protection policies and practices.

Fundamental to this process is getting a bird's-eye view of the social-service workforce in El Salvador and assessing the overall quality of social work. The main activity under this component involves mapping social workers' roles and responsibility for case management and supervision which will entail, among other things:

- assessing child protection and case management skills;
- assessing curricula for university social-work degrees;
- collecting data on reports of abuse and neglect, cases investigated, and their disposition; and,
- determining caseloads and turnover.

These activities will result in the identification of gaps in financial, human, technical, and procedural capacity and make recommendations to address such gaps, and it will guide the project's third component which includes support for innovative approaches to utilize the current childcare and social-service workforce to expand family-based care.

Another important activity under this component involves assessing the implementation to date of El Salvador's deinstitutionalization policy. The assessment will be done under the direction of, and in collaboration with, ISNA, the Salvadoran government's ministry for children. The assessment will address, among other things, the quality of case records, the status and well-being of deinstitutionalized children, and, the quality of family-based care received by formerly institutionalized children.

Finally, under this component there will be an assessment of the quality of care in El Salvador's remaining public and NGO-run residential care centers, of which there are approximately 30. The assessment will identify how each center can improve quality of care and children's developmental outcomes through operational changes, training, and mentoring (the project's second component), and will gauge their readiness or capacity to provide social-work-related services (the project's third component).

---

*Please keep reading this series of posts to learn more about the other components of this project and how they will help children in El Salvador. ([Jump to Part 3 — "Training and Mentoring."](#))*

## Training and Mentoring (Part 3 of 5)

by [wholechild](#) | Jan 8, 2019 | [English](#), [Uncategorized](#)

*This is the third of a five-post blog series introducing our USAID-funded "Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project" exploring its three principal components, and putting it all into a wider context. (Jump back to Part 1 [here](#) and Part 2 [here](#).)*

---

The second component of the project focuses on building the capacity of ISNA, the Salvadoran government's ministry of child services, and its training school to plan, deliver, and sustain a comprehensive national training and mentoring program which will help improve the quality of care and developmental outcomes among El Salvador's most vulnerable children.

Training and mentoring focus on the range of people involved in planning and delivering *quality care*: the caregivers themselves, their mentor-supervisors, technical leaders, academics, policymakers, members of the judiciary involved in child welfare and protection, and, of course, parents.

Training content focuses on key topics related to best policy and practice in child development, childcare, and child protection including the neuroscience of early child

development and the buffering effect of nurturing care relationships that create resilience to the toxic stress of an environment of extreme violence. The mentoring component involves one-on-one follow-up on the results of our assessments of residential care centers and support for early childhood caregivers in the early childhood care and development (ECCD) centers. It is a key step towards improvement of care after the initial assessments are carried out in [Part 1](#).

Five best practices for quality childcare in limited-resource settings are [at the core of all training and mentoring](#):

- Responsive relationship-centered caregiving.
- Continuous primary care.
- Small groups.
- Freedom of movement; and
- Individuality and identity.

Prior work by Whole Child and partners in El Salvador demonstrated that a key challenge to improving care quality is to effectively improve communication between supervisors and caregivers. Therefore, training of supervisors and directors will include a substantial focus on best practice in mentoring — developing capacity to support behavior change in respectful and productive ways which helps ensure best care practices are maintained.

The training program will not only increase the use of best caregiving practices, but it will strengthen the critical mass of practitioners and policymakers equipped to champion national care reform more broadly by, for example, strengthening the social service workforce, carefully moving children from institutional care to family-based care, and strengthening systems to monitor their care in families — which will be the subject of our next blog post.

---

*The next post will explore the third component of this project, "Family-Based Care Practices" — a series of interventions that will help residential care centers expand their social services and train care center staff to provide desperately needed case management in a country that has far too few social workers to respond to its citizens' child protection needs. ([jump to Part 4 — "Family-Based Care Practices."](#))*

## Family-Based Care Practices (Part 4 of 5)

by [wholechild](#) | Jan 18, 2019 | [English](#)

*This is the fourth of a five-post blog series introducing our USAID-funded "Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project" and its three principal components, and putting it all into a wider context. ([Jump back to Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), or [Part 3](#).)*

The Project's third component focuses on supporting the ongoing transition from residential to family care for vulnerable children in El Salvador.

The number of children in residential care decreased from 6,000 in 2009 to an estimated 1,500 in 2017. In 2017, for instance, 250 institutionalized children were reintegrated with families. Much good work has been done to date on the care transition, but challenges remain. To help the government address these challenges and achieve a lasting re-orientation of the residential care sector toward family and community-based care, our Project will:

- promote and develop the desire for change within the residential care sector.
- support the development of the legal and policy reform necessary to permit residential care institutions to take on social casework such as family reunification, reintegration, and preservation; and coordinate with judges, local child rights boards and social service staff in the transition process.
- demonstrate how existing residential care professionals can be re-trained and re-deployed to do case management, supervision, training in parenting, and family support;
- pilot foster and kinship care approaches modeled on prior work done by NGOs and others;
- strengthen the system to monitor the well-being and safety of children placed in family-based care.

These activities will be informed by the assessment of the government's de-institutionalization program that we will conduct under [the first component of the project](#).

---

*That's the "Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project" in a nutshell! Please stay tuned for Part 5 of this series, which will explain the connection between the project and the humanitarian crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border. ([Jump to Part 4 — "The Connection between Our Project and the Border Crisis."](#))*

## The Connection Between Our Project and the Border Crisis (Part 5 of 5)

by [wholechild](#) | Jan 30, 2019 | [English](#)

*This is the fifth of a five-post blog series. [Part 1](#) introduced our USAID-funded "Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project" and [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), and [Part 4](#) described its three principal components. This post will serve to put it all into a wider context.*

While the Protection and Quality of Care for Children Project was not timed or designed to respond directly to the ongoing migration crisis that became BREAKING NEWS in mid-2018 with the separations of children from their parents, the project's focus on child protection, quality caregiving, and early childhood development does help ameliorate root causes of the crisis — violence and poverty — and it helps respond to consequences of the crisis — child separation and family dislocation.

For example, as described in the previous posts, the project will use an evidence-based approach to prevent children from becoming victims of violence — or perpetrators of it — by strengthening:

- the child protection and social service workforce;
- case management, so more children are placed in safer care settings; the system for monitoring children's well-being;
- the care system's capacity to respond to reported cases of violence, abuse, and neglect; and
- the capacity of caregivers and parents to practice positive parenting and relationship-centered care that builds children's socio-emotional health and resilience.

The project will generate policy and technical recommendations based on concrete experiences of children and youth within El Salvador's child protection system and incorporating proven best practices in other countries and institutional settings.

This system and capacity strengthening will also help the government continue and improve its efforts to reunify, and support migrant children and youth returning to El Salvador due to deportation or the dangers and difficulties of migration.

The project will also help prevent family breakdown by expanding access to quality early childhood education and daycare that enables vulnerable families, including women-headed households, to earn income and break the cycle of poverty that drives irregular migration.

---

*For the next five years, we'll be talking about this program in these pages. We hope you'll keep reading as we conduct this program, assess its impact, and hopefully demonstrate the potential of these ideas for making a real, lasting, and meaningful impact on the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable children — benefits that reach across Salvadoran society and indeed help ensure a more peaceful and secure American continent for us all.*