

## Global Design Lab Experience

July 2014

I entered the Global Design Lab 2014 with a healthy dose of skepticism.

Although meeting twenty-five international individuals was an exciting prospect, the ideals of world peace and prosperity that assembled us together appeared full of glossy-eyed naïveté. The Global Design Lab was described to me as “a weeklong process of uniting global citizens’ experiences and ingenuity in order to focus on designing realistic solutions to global problems.” Entering, I was somewhat cynical towards the real-life value of such nebulous goals.

My first day of the Lab left my opinion relatively unchanged. Arriving at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, the first evening was occupied by monologue from by our founder, Medard Gabel. I lost interest in the idealistic speech about the possibility of utopia and my fellow twenty-four exhausted international travelers did as well. I went to sleep with dismal dreams, weary of an unpleasant weeklong experience.

However, over the next few days a metamorphosis began to occur. First, we were divided into groups. My group of five represented Warsaw, Poland and Tbilisi, Georgia and Montreal, Canada. I was thrilled to learn about each of their different cultures and societies. As we collaborated on our Clean Water project, we got to know each other, and our enthusiasm grew exponentially. Together we called companies up, researched online and compared notes. The Lab became less about lessons and more about finding realistic yet creative solutions. Additionally, we could compare our progress with the other six groups for some friendly competition.

As a result of our group work, I became more excited about learning. During sessions we teleconferenced with United Nations officials, including United Nations Deputy Director Ramu Damodaran, and could directly ask questions pertaining to our research. We spoke with six officials total. The breadth of knowledge they provided elevated our understanding and motivation tremendously. I acquired information that made what once were ideals much more plausible. According to UN Security Department statistics, the world annually spends \$1.7 trillion on military expenses. That is more than four times the estimated amount of money

needed to resolve the water, food and health crisis. I also learned lasting change is possible, because it has been done: the UN has already reached several of its Millennium Development Goals set in 2000. For instance, the UN cut the number of people without access clean water in half in 2013, two years before their deadline of 2015.

Over the week, my group's unique combination of global perspectives yielded dynamic results. From the conglomerate blob of our ideas, a [final presentation](#) began to cement itself.

In the end, I was proud to see how our group had matured our ideas into clear and concise plans. We nervously presented at the UN and received constructive criticism from UN representatives. Within the next month, we will publish our finalized plans in the Global Design Lab book, which will be distributed among UN officials and global leaders. Superior to the rewards of our UN presentation and eventual publication, I was most impacted by what my group taught me: that regardless of country, humans have one fundamental makeup. We can all laugh together, strive together and work together regardless of boundaries.

One week from a cynical start, I'd developed a newfound confidence in my generation and our capability to enact realistic, positive global change. Greater than the certificate that I received was the treasure trove of international understanding and relationships that I walked away with. Each relationship reflected a multitude of cultures that, when put together, melded into a collective spirit of human ingenuity. Working with a group of twenty-five different individuals, hailing from Nigeria to Thailand, is the true appeal of the Global Design Lab, a phenomenal experience I would now recommend to all ages.

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### Bibliography

Gabel, Medard. "Big Picture Small World: Home." *Big Picture Small World: Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 July 2014.

Morris, Jabel. "Strategy for Success." *UN Water: Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 July 2014.



Our plan was to give global corporations an incentive to provide access clean water for everyone. To encourage this, we made a system in which a company can loan the patented “Slingshot Water Purifier” to an entire village. The villagers can use the purifier for themselves and sell excess clean water to fellow villages at a much lower price. The purifier produces up to 1000L a day from dirty water, enough for over 100 people. Within six months the village could pay back the investment and continue having clean water. The village would pay a 10% tax to the company, who continues to benefit from the investment.