



Alumni Spotlight

Gifty Abraham graduated from the Political Science M.A. program in May 2015, majoring in International Relations. He is currently an Administrative Assistant at [Global Kids](#).



By Beth Newcomer

Beth: What made you choose the Political Science program at the GC for your graduate work?

Gifty: I chose the GC because it was the best value for a high-quality education and because of the faculty. With the flexibility of the program schedule I was able to finish my M.A. in three semesters rather than four, which was also a big plus. I needed to be able to quickly get back to full-time work.

B: *What have you found most valuable about your education at the GC?*

G: The most valuable thing I got from the program was that I learned what I'm most passionate about. I want to work on eradicating infectious diseases. Where I'm working now is a great place to work and to learn and I know I'm making an impact. But I ultimately want to work with campaigns to eradicate infectious diseases, specifically malaria.

B: *Why malaria?*

G: Malaria is fascinating. Most epidemic diseases have been with us about as long as we've had stable population centers, about 10,000 years ago. But malaria has been around much longer than that, and according to some estimates has contributed to as many as half of all human deaths ever. So much of history and politics is shaped by disease. Today malaria is entirely treatable and it has a pretty low death rate. But it makes many people sick in areas

where people are already very poor and missing a day's work means their family doesn't eat. The cost to some countries is huge in terms of economic output. We often ask questions like, can Africa compete in the world economy? But we can't even have that discussion until we consider if people in certain areas of Africa have a fair chance at a reasonable life without debilitating disease.

B: *So where do you begin on an issue as big as malaria?*

G: There are some international coalitions doing great work, and what I have to contribute is my knowledge and skills to one of those organizations. There are no silver bullets for malaria. They've been tried and failed. All parts of the problem have to be addressed and it will take all stakeholders working together to really make a difference.

B: *That leads us to your thesis. Give us the elevator version?*

G: My thesis is a conceptual puzzle with two parts. One, why do states cooperate to eradicate diseases in the face of structural and situational incentives not to do so? Everything we know about the international structural system says that this will fail. For example, Smallpox was successfully eradicated during the height of the Cold War and its eradication required the cooperation of the US and the USSR. Either of these countries could've just aimed for elimination, that is, ending the disease within their own borders, and then stopped, not caring if other countries, especially their enemies, hadn't eliminated it. Why would these countries care about what happens in other countries? The second part of the puzzle is that when these countries somehow do decide to cooperate, how do you get to global zero? In my paper I claim there are five necessary but insufficient factors.

B: *And those are?*

G: You'll have to [read it to find out](#).

