

GAC028 Global Issues, Source Evaluation and Group Problem Solving

GAC Social Science

A local study sits inside a wider global issue

A school can measure one week's food waste without explaining every country's food system. A historical conference can show international attention without proving that a problem was solved. These additional notes broaden the existing GAC028 handout's historical context and develop source evaluation, group problem solving and academic discussion. Follow your current centre guide for the required issue selection, depth and assessment task.

Major issues across the past century

A **global issue** connects societies through causes, effects or responses. The following dated examples provide an outline across economic security, peace, public health, environment and development. They are selected contexts, not a claim that all places had the same experience or that a milestone solved the issue.

Issue family	Selected historical context	Question for analysis
Economic security	Depression began in 1929 and spread internationally	How did household experiences differ?
Peace and cooperation	UN founded in 1945 after the Second World War	How can societies coordinate responses?
Public health	WHO intensified the programme in 1967; eradication in 1980	What helped coordinated prevention?
Environment	Stockholm 1972 helped establish UNEP	How do environmental effects cross boundaries?
Development	The 2015 SDGs link poverty, health, education and environment	Which indicators fit the question?

Economic security concerns access to resources and livelihoods. Federal Reserve History describes the Depression's spread and unemployment, but its main account focuses on the United States. Use it for those historical claims; a claim about a

particular other society needs suitable evidence about that society. Do not make the stock-market crash a complete explanation of every consequence. Federal Reserve History: Great Depression.

Conflict can disrupt lives, movement and livelihoods across places. The UN's history records its creation in 1945 with the aim of preventing another world war. An institution's purpose is different from evidence that every later conflict was prevented. Analyse a specific response, its evidence and its limits. UN history.

Public health addresses health at population level. WHO's smallpox history describes coordinated vaccination and surveillance, the intensified programme in 1967 and the 1980 eradication declaration. This is a particular historical achievement. It does not show that all diseases can be addressed by an identical programme or that technology alone secured the result. WHO smallpox history.

Environmental problems can connect production, consumption, shared resources and effects on other people. UNEP's history identifies the 1972 Stockholm conference and its role in establishing UNEP. A conference or agreement records a response; measurements are still needed to assess an environmental change. UNEP environmental timeline.

Development includes several aspects of people's lives. The 2015 SDGs connect poverty reduction with health, education, inequality and environmental concerns. They are goals and targets, not a report that every target was achieved. An income indicator alone does not establish a community's health or education experience. Select measures relevant to the question and compare their definitions. UN Sustainable Development Goals. Historical sources checked 2 October 2026.

Evaluate a source before building an argument

An **authoritative source** has relevant expertise or a documented basis for the claim being used. An institutional name is a useful starting point, not permission to ignore scope, methods or uncertainty. A historical account can support a dated milestone; a local measurement report can support a result for its stated place and period. A promotional statement about success needs the evidence used to judge success.

Keep an evidence log: claim, source, date, population or setting, measure, method and limitation. Trace a statistic to its original report when possible. Check whether two websites reproduce the same evidence. A **bias** can arise from selection, wording, missing responses or interpretation. Identify how the problem might affect the result; do not merely label a source "biased" because you disagree with it.

Worked comparison: a target and an observation

One source sets a waste-reduction target. Another records waste per served meal during three lunches. The target shows an intended outcome; the observations describe a measured period. Comparing them needs compatible measures and relevant context. Neither source shows that a new school policy caused a reduction when no intervention was tested. State exactly which claim each source supports.

Investigate a local part with an appropriate method

Write a bounded question such as: “What returned plate-waste mass per served meal was recorded in the observed lunches, and what reasons did volunteers report?” A **quantitative method** measures amounts or counts. A **qualitative method** examines accounts and meanings. The original handout’s six kilograms across thirty meals gives 0.20 kilograms per served meal. Volunteer interviews can add reported reasons, not prove their causes.

Specify observation period, selection, categories, units, permissions and analysis before collecting anything. Use the same recording rule and retain unexpected records. Pilot wording with permission. Explain consent, data handling and withdrawal limits under the approved procedure. A school’s permitted pilot does not represent all schools or solve global food waste. A literature review supports background; it does not replace required observations that were never made.

Solve a group problem with explicit criteria

A **stakeholder** is a person or group affected by a decision. Students, canteen staff and school managers may have different needs. Define the problem from evidence, generate alternatives, compare criteria and justify a feasible proposal. Keep unresolved evidence and required permissions visible.

In this fictional planning case, no intervention has been performed:

Proposal	Possible benefit	What needs checking
Offer an approved smaller-portion option	Could better match some students’ appetites	Nutrition requirements, staff capacity, demand and actual waste
Ask volunteers about portion preferences	Could clarify reported preferences	Neutral wordings, recruitment and how findings will be used
Display a waste reminder	Could draw attention to the issue	Comprehension, unintended pressure and whether waste changes

Given only reported portion concerns, a team could propose an approved preference study first to check demand and feasibility. Record its criteria, reasoning and disagreement. This does not demonstrate reduced waste. A later evaluation needs comparable waste-per-meal measures and attention to changed menus or recruitment.

Lead an academic discussion for the audience

Academic register uses precise language and distinguishes evidence from opinion. Adapt to the audience's knowledge: define technical measures, explain denominators and state limits. Clear language need not sound complicated.

Plan speaker and chair roles, rehearse handovers and agree a discussion question. The chair can ask which criteria should compare the options and invite quieter members without forcing personal disclosure. Summarise views fairly, ask what evidence would resolve disagreement, and identify an agreed next step or unresolved point.

Supported statement: "Seven volunteers mentioned portion size; this justifies exploring preferences, not predicting a policy's effect." Avoid claiming that everyone wants smaller meals or that an untested solution will work. Cite borrowed claims and separate fictional practice data from researched findings.

Practice and explained answers

1. Why does a 1945 institutional purpose not prove that every later conflict was prevented?
2. What does the smallpox example establish, and what broader claim does it not establish?
3. How does a target differ from an observation?
4. Why can the waste counts and interviews answer different parts of one question?
5. Name two criteria for comparing the fictional portion proposals.
6. What should a discussion chair do with disagreement?
7. Rewrite "Everyone wants smaller meals, so the solution will work."

Answers. **1.** An aim is not a measurement of all later outcomes. **2.** A particular coordinated programme achieved eradication; it does not establish one universal programme for all diseases. **3.** A target specifies an intended result; an observation records evidence. **4.** Counts measure recorded amounts; interviews explore reported reasons. **5.** Staff capacity and demand, or nutrition requirements and measured waste. **6.** Summarise views fairly, compare criteria and identify needed evidence or an unresolved point. **7.** Seven volunteers mentioned portion size; further permitted research is needed before predicting policy effects.