Waste

Why is this a Global Justice Issue (GJI)?

Waste generation and management has a significant climate impact as well as infringing on human rights in local and global contexts. Human rights abuses experienced by waste pickers in the Global South relate to health risks, unsafe working conditions, child labour, discrimination and harassment. Local human rights concerns include the location of waste incinerators (more likely in disadvantaged neighbourhoods) and health concerns over air, water and soil contamination. Furthermore, the export of waste from the Global North to countries in the Global South perpetuates inequalities (wealth, trade, power) built upon colonial relations.

Connected Global Justice Issues

Child Labour, Labour Rights, Trade Justice, Circular Economy, Poverty, Ethical Consumption, Degrowth, Fast Fashion.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

3: Good Health and Wellbeing. 6: Clean Water and Sanitation. 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. 10: Reduced Inequalities. 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. 13: Climate Action. 15: Life on Land.

Topic	Teaching and Learning Activity	Resource for Activity
Myths about Waste	**Quiz**: Create a quiz to debunk myths about waste. Use a free quiz creator tool or make your own.	10 Myths About Waste from developmenteducation.ie This PDF contains a short introduction and links to the SDGs, followed by popular myths about global waste and consumption which are then debunked/falsified with accurate reliable information.
	Walking Debate: Use the myths as statements for a debate.	Walking Debate from WWGS
	Jigsaw Activity: Divide the 10 myths across 5 student groups, learners become experts and teach other learners their myths.	Jigsaw from OIDE

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Rethinking Waste	Explore waste as a global justice issue through videos, infographics, a cartoon image and fact sheets, available in the WWGS Doing GCE guide.	See the WWGS Guide Doing GCE in Junior Cycle Wood Technology, pgs. 48-54, full lesson with step by step instructions, accompanying PowerPoint and student worksheets 
	Problems & Solutions Tree Identify root causes and focus on positive actions.	Problems & Solutions Tree from WWGS 
Waste as a Justice Issue	**Student Video Lesson** This ready-to-go informative and interactive video lesson explores waste as a justice issue and suggests ways we can act for better systems. The video engages learners through quizzes, questions and student tasks.	ISSN/GAP: Back to Basics student video lesson (27mins) from Global Action Plan. 
Global Waste Trade	**Gallery Walk:** Use images and quotes from the Intersectional Environmentalist Toolkit. See WWGS Activities Resource for details on Gallery Walk.	Toolkit from Intersectional Environmentalist: Modern-Day Imperialism in the Global Waste Trade. This digital and downloadable toolkit explores the global waste trade, it includes a summary, definitions, colonial legacies, plastic waste, policy changes, Global South community efforts, actions, and more. 
	Digging Deeper Tool: Students carry out research based on the Toolkit and use the Digging Deeper Tool to explore waste as a GJI in-depth.	

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Waste Pickers	**Q&A: Video & Article** Questions: Name the different types of waste and consider why some are more valuable than others. Identify the health concerns associated with waste picking. List the human rights abuses.	How Kenyan Waste Pickers Are Fighting the Plastic Pollution Crisis (2025) 4.53mins Tearfund: Who are Waste Pickers (2025)
Waste Pickers	**Q&A: Video & Article** Questions: Describe the role of waste pickers in waste management. What does the 'formalisation of waste pickers' mean for the day-to-day lives of waste pickers? What challenges remain?	A Day in the Life: The Manguang Landfill Waste Pickers (2025) 5mins UN Environmental Programme (2025): short article on role of waste pickers in ending plastic pollution
Waste Pickers	**Advocacy and campaigns** Based on the articles and video create bullet points to summarise the ongoing efforts and progress towards ensuring rights for waste pickers.	Securing the rights of workers in the informal waste sector, Tearfund (2023) Leader of Kenyan Waste Pickers: We are the backbone of recycling, Guardian (2023) WIEGO blog 2022: Global Plastics Treaty: Waste Pickers Ready to Talk Cooperative of waste pickers fighting for rights for waste pickers (2023) 1-min teaser video

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Waste Pickers	**World Café:** 4 cafés, 4 different aspects: human rights issues, what waste pickers want, potential solutions/actions, challenges.	World Café activity from WWGS 
Waste Pickers	**Building Empathy** Carry out the activity 'Other People's Shoes' to build empathy with waste pickers.	Other People's Shoes in Teaching Controversial Issues p.68. 
Finding Root Causes	Students read some or all of these short articles to gain a deeper understanding of waste as a global justice issue. Use a **Why-Why-Why Chain** to explore the root causes of waste as a GJI.	The Global Waste Crisis: A Social Justice Issue (Medium, 2023) 3-min read  Why is the global waste crisis a social justice issue? (Zero Waste Europe, 2022) 4-min read  Collapse of the global plastic talks, see 2024 (Resource Media) and 2025 (BBC article)  Waste Colonialism (2021), The Guardian  Why-Why-Why Chain activity from WWGS 

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Focusing on Solutions	**Think-Pair-Share** Read the articles and/or watch the videos. Use a think-pair-share strategy to come up with solutions and potential actions, include possible student actions.	Greenpeace Blog Feb 2025 How Traditional Practices and Modern Solutions Can End Waste Colonialism? Video: Meet the Kenyan woman turning plastics into bricks (2023) 6mins Zihanga: Converting Organic Waste into Valuable Resources in Kenya (2025) 4.43mins
Focusing on Solutions	**Concentric Circles** Brainstorm solutions to waste as a justice issue.	Concentric Circles activity from WWGS
	Consequence Wheel Focus on the potential consequences of actions and solutions to waste colonialism.	Consequence Wheel activity from WWGS



- Trash Hack from UNESCO. 16-page Teachers' Guide with infographics, facts (2021) and nine SDG related activities for taking action towards building a more just and sustainable world
- Organise a whole-school event for International Day of Zero Waste, explore the UN website and Zero Waste Europe for campaigns and actions linked to the day. Ensure to scaffold teaching and learning around the event to ensure critical GCE. See our website for the WWGS scaffolding guide.
- Consult the WWGS Teacher Handbook p.16-18 for ideas on student action.
- For workshop facilitators on linked global justice issues, see the WWGS Directory of GCE facilitators.