100 key research questions for the post-2015 development agenda

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) herald a new phase for international development. This article presents the results of a consultative exercise to collaboratively identify 100 research questions of critical importance for the post-2015 international development agenda. The final shortlist is grouped into nine thematic areas and was selected by 21 representatives of international and non-governmental organisations and consultancies, and 14 academics with diverse disciplinary expertise from an initial pool of 704 questions submitted by 110 organisations based in 34 countries. The shortlist includes questions addressing long-standing problems, new challenges and broader issues related to development policies, practices and institutions. Collectively, these questions are relevant for future development-related research priorities of governmental and non-governmental organisations worldwide and could act as focal points for transdisciplinary research collaborations.

Key words: Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, priority setting, research questions, knowledge co-production, international development

1   Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century heralded a shift in international development priorities and practices. The adoption of the Millennium Declaration at the United Nations (UN) in 2000, and ensuing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), committed the international community to achieving eight ambitious development

objectives by 2015. Now, almost 15 years after the Millennium Declaration, a new phase for international development is about to begin, and with it an opportunity to critically assess how new development goals and milestones are likely to be shaped and delivered. This article, and the research exercise underpinning it, assumes that a greater understanding of development needs and practices can better sustain a new agenda for change, and that a key step in this process is to identify priorities based on both new and longstanding knowledge gaps, to help orient decision-making processes and funding allocation in academia and beyond. The process of identifying research priorities needs to move beyond academia and involve a broader set of political and social stakeholders because the impact of solution-based research approaches depends on how the academic community is able to collaboratively engage with problems faced by practitioners and policy-makers.

In recent years, the debate about international development strategies has largely focused on the direction to be taken by the 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) set to supersede the MDGs (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010; Vandemoortele, 2011; Sachs, 2012; Glaser, 2012; Griggs et al., 2013). Although poverty remains a key priority, it is increasingly being paired with 'sustainability'. According to the recently published draft of the SDGs (UN, 2015), efforts to end poverty should be embedded in long-term strategies that combine inclusive and sustained economic growth, social development and environmental protection. This new focus on 'green growth', or indeed alternative measures of economic progress, and the awareness of our globalised and interconnected world have led to a re-evaluation of the role of industrialised countries as bearers of shared responsibilities in the implementation of both policy reforms and practical actions (Sachs, 2012; Wisor, 2012), and to an emphasis on the universality of development concerns, strategies and solutions.

Research that underlies development policy agendas has not always been effectively translated into practice (Fukuda-Parr, 2011). The challenge of doing so has led to a realisation that transdisciplinary efforts for knowledge co-production combining the expertise of academics, practitioners and policy-makers are needed to design problem-driven, usable and solution-oriented approaches. International transdisciplinary research initiatives, such as Future Earth,[1] respond to calls for more inclusive and evidence-based decision-making processes (for example, Glaser, 2012). However, uncertainty remains about how to successfully align research and policy priorities to devise effective approaches for contemporary problems (Dessai et al., 2013). Doing so is fraught with difficulties; beyond designed solutions, there are issues of politics (international, national and local) and challenges of implementation. Nevertheless, a first order problem is that of finding spaces of agreement on some fundamental areas that must be the focus of attention.

This article presents the results of a consultative and priority-setting exercise that addresses the need to articulate and better align the research interests and priorities of academics and practitioners working on international development to a post-2015 international development framework. To this end, a total of 35

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1. Future Earth is a recently launched 10-year international research initiative supported by the United Nations, the International Council for Science, the International Social Science Council and the Belmont Forum focusing environmental change and global sustainability.

academics and representatives of non-governmental (NGOs) and international organisations with a diverse set of expertise (Appendix 1) took part in a consultative exercise to collaboratively identify 100 questions that have not yet been satisfactorily addressed and that are of critical importance for the new development agenda. Research priority setting exercises such as this one provide a unique opportunity for a variety of stakeholders to reach consensus on a set of research priorities put forward by larger group of actors. We foresee the questions in the final shortlist informing post-2015 related research agendas of international, governmental and non-governmental organisations and acting as focal points for future research collaborations among stakeholders.

The article is organised as follows: after a methods section, the 100 questions identified through the consultation are presented according to their main thematic area. The list of questions is then critically evaluated in the final discussion section, which highlights both the relevance of these results and the limitations of consultative exercises such as this one.

2   Methods

The exercise was organised around a two-stage consultation and shortlisting process that aimed to gather a broad range of perspectives from development stakeholders in the global north and south.

2.1 Consultation

The first phase of the project used three approaches to arrive at an initial set of candidate questions:

1) Between February 17 and June 4, 2014, the Sheffield Institute for International Development (SIID) – a multidisciplinary research institute based at the University of Sheffield (UK) – conducted an open consultation, offering national and international NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, governmental agencies, think-tanks, academic institutions, as well as individuals, the opportunity to submit up to five questions via an on-line portal or email. To try and maximise representation from different institutions and geographical regions, SIID invited 839 individuals from 675 organisations based in Africa (160), Australasia (122), Europe (218), Latin (163) and North America (176) and working on a broad range of themes within the development sector to contribute questions. This list of organisations was compiled using Internet searches and assessing the remit and geographical coverage of individual organisations. Of the individuals contacted, 197 were personal contacts or were suggested by collaborators. To further encourage the submission of questions by individuals and organisations that were not contacted directly during the consultation phase, these activities were complemented with an on-line social media campaign using Facebook, Twitter (#ID100), and a dedicated website.

2) In May 2014, SIID organised a workshop in collaboration with the United Kingdom's membership body of international development NGOs (BOND) and the UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS). The event was attended by 50 practitioners and academics, who collectively formulated a series of questions that fed into the consultation process.

3) On July 1-2, 2014, 30 academics and practitioners attended a two-day workshop held in the UK. Workshop participants were nationals from a number of countries in the Global North and South and had variety of specialisms, regional areas of expertise and experience in international development issues. Prior to the workshop, each participant was requested to submit between 10 and 20 questions.

Individuals submitting questions were encouraged to discuss ideas with colleagues and formulate questions arising from these conversations using the criteria set out by Sutherland et al. (2011) for similar priority–setting exercises, along with a record of how many people participated in these discussions. As a starting point for the exercise, we relied on the thematic priorities that have guided the 'World We Want' campaign – a global stakeholder consultation conducted by the UN between 2010 and 2014 involving governments, civil society and lay citizens. The instructions for the submission of questions asked participants to assign one of the 11 themes[2] identified by the 'World We Want' campaign to individual questions but also provided an option to create new categories if participants felt that none of the themes was applicable. This provided a framework for questions to directly address the post-2015 discussion and feed into some of the major areas identified globally. At the same time, the relatively loose and optional link to the 'World We Want' thematic priorities offered participants the possibility to address issues going beyond the discussion on new development goals. Indeed, a substantial number of questions did not fit any of the initial 11 themes and generally focused on broader issues around the politics, practices and institutions of development itself and the need to rethink and reform them.

During the consultation phase, 705 individuals from 109 organisations based in 34 countries (Appendix 1) were involved in the formulation of 704 questions. Of the 669 organisations directly invited to contribute during the consultation phase, 35 submitted a total of 115 questions, a response rate of approximately 5%. While academic institutions and NGOs submitted the majority of questions (41% and 32% respectively) think-tanks, intergovernmental organisations and government agencies submitted approximately a quarter. Institutions based in Europe and North America contributed 74% of questions, while organisations in Latin America, Africa and Australasia accounted for 22% of submitted questions. Workshop participants submitted approximately a third of questions (35%), with those who were made aware of the project via social media or word of mouth contributing a similar amount (30%). Additional questions were submitted by directly-invited individuals (16%), the remaining authors of this article (10%) and BOND/UKCDS workshop attendees (8%) (Table 1).

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2. Inequalities, Health; Education; Growth and Employment; Environmental Sustainability; Governance; Conflict and Fragility; Population Dynamics; Hunger, Food and Nutrition Security; Energy; Water.

Table 1: Percentage of questions submitted during the consultation phase by different institutions, regions and contributors

Academic institutions	Non-governmental organisations	Think tanks	Intergovernmental organisations	Governmental agencies	Consultancies	Private sector/ individuals
41%	32%	13%	8%	3%	1%	1%
UK	Rest of Europe	North America	Latin America	Africa	Australasia	Undisclosed
49%	15%	10%	9%	9%	4%	1%
Workshop participants	Social media/ word of mouth	Direct invitation	Remaining authors	BOND/ UKCDS workshop	Undisclosed	
35%	30%	16%	10%	8%	1%	

2.2. Shortlisting

The 704 questions submitted (Table 2) were regrouped into nine macro-thematic sections in preparation for the shortlisting process.[3] This was done to identify and prevent thematic overlaps and to ensure, as much as possible, that each thematic session discussed a more balanced number of questions. Eight of these sections consisted of questions submitted under the original 11 'World We Want' themes. The ninth section, 'Development policies, practices and institutions', comprised 102 questions addressing broader aspects of international development.

Two weeks prior to the workshop, 35 experts, including all workshop participants and a number of individuals who contributed questions but were unable to attend the workshop, were asked to identify their top ranking (~20%) questions within at least two of the nine sections. Results from the preliminary voting round formed the basis for the discussions and subsequent refinement and shortlisting during the workshop. To reduce bias, each participant received a spreadsheet containing all questions within each section in a randomised order.

To ensure as broad a set of views as possible during the shortlisting process, four criteria were considered when selecting workshop participants: (i) thematic expertise, (ii) institutional affiliation, (iii) geographic location and experience, and (iv) gender. This allowed us to include representatives based in fifteen countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe,[4] a minimum number of experts in each of the nine sections (three), of whom 14 were women and 16 were men. Representatives from NGOs (10), intergovernmental organisations (4), governmental agencies (2), think-tanks (2) and consultancies (2) accounted for about two thirds of workshop participants, while the remaining one third included academics with a range of expertise, including political science, anthropology, economics, geography, environmental sciences and public health.

The two-day workshop was organised into a series of parallel thematic sessions and a final plenary session. Participants were free to attend individual sessions of their choice but were asked to ensure that each session was attended by an approximately equal number of participants. During each session, questions were iteratively debated, rephrased as necessary, and grouped into 'gold', 'silver' and 'bronze' categories ('gold' being the most highly ranked, followed by 'silver' and 'bronze') by discussion, followed by general consensus or voting by show of hands. Tied votes were resolved through an additional show of hands. Low-ranking questions were discussed first. Those considered unlikely to make it to the final shortlist by the group were excluded and poorly-formulated questions were redrafted for further discussion. Topic areas that were recognised as being entirely absent were set aside and addressed by rephrasing closely relevant questions or formulating new questions.

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3. Environmental Sustainability; Food Security, Land and Agriculture; Energy and Natural Resources, Governance, Rights and Participation; Conflict, Population Dynamics and Urbanisation; Economic Growth, Employment and the Private Sector; Development Politics, Practices and Institutions.

4. Budget constraints and logistic (visa and travel-related) problems impeded higher participation from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Table 2: Questions submitted by different kinds of organisations under the UN 'World We Want' themes and the additional 'Development Policies, Practices and Institutions' section

	Non-governmental organisations	Intergovernmental organisations	Think tanks	Governmental agencies	Academic institutions	Consultancies	Other entities	Total questions
Conflict and fragility	14	3	6	2	16	2	0	43
Education	9	0	5	1	14	3	0	32
Energy	7	7	1	6	8	1	1	31
Environmental sustainability	20	10	7	1	30	1	0	69
Food security	21	2	6	0	26	0	1	56
Governance	25	10	16	2	43	0	1	97
Growth and employment	32	5	15	4	22	1	0	79
Health	26	2	2	3	25	1	0	59
Inequalities	22	4	13	0	30	1	1	71
Population dynamics	8	1	9	2	21	0	0	41
Water	7	1	1	0	15	0	0	24
Development policies, practices and institutions	35	9	10	2	42	0	4	102

Figure 1: Flowchart depicting the shortlisting of questions during the workshop's individual thematic sessions during the first day (A), and the second day's joint thematic sessions (B) and plenary session (C)
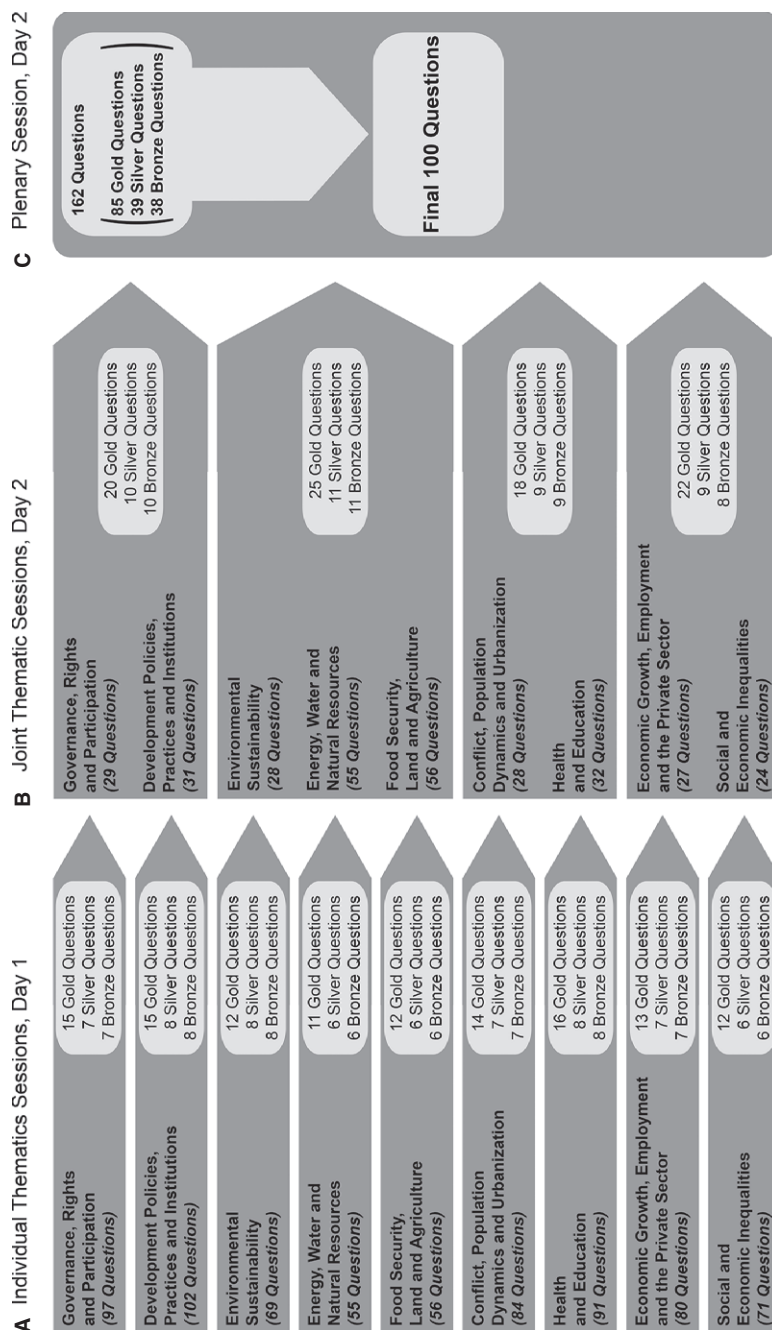
Sessions on the first day of the workshop considered each of the nine sections independently and reduced the number of questions from 704 to 240, with each session putting forward between 11–16 'gold'-ranked questions, 6–8 'silver'-ranked questions and 6–8 'bronze'-ranked questions (Fig. 1A) (this was the process adopted by Sutherland et al., 2013). On the second day of the workshop, the sessions considered two or three of the nine themes jointly. Participants continued to refine and reformulate the previously shortlisted questions, removed overlapping questions and further reduced the number of questions from 240 to 162 (Fig. 1B). Each session proposed between 18–25 'gold'-ranked questions, 9–11 'silver'-ranked questions and 8–11 'bronze'-ranked questions. This resulted in 85 'gold' questions, 39 'silver' questions and 38 'bronze' questions that were further refined, rephrased and shortlisted to the final 100 during the plenary session (Fig. 1C). This final list of questions was subsequently edited by JAO, LBF, JG, NR and DH and then circulated for final editing by the remaining authors.

3   Questions

After the final shortlisting, questions were regrouped into one of the original nine macro-thematic sections but were not assigned a rank. Given that questions often cut across themes, the nine groupings chosen and the order in which the questions appear represent only one convenient way of categorising questions.

3.1 Governance, participation and rights

Governance is exercised through laws, norms, language and power at formal or informal levels, through bureaucracies or participation and through the state or other forms of organisation. Formal governance can refer to 'mechanisms, institutions and processes through which authority is exercised in the conduct of public affairs' (OHCHR, 2006). The definition and creation of spaces for economic and political interactions, and decision-making processes, are central to the relationship between states and citizens and to the capacity of states and other actors to achieve their goals (Grindle, 2004). Governance mechanisms at the subnational, national and international levels constitute the arenas where rights are negotiated, legal frameworks established and implementation measures designed and put into action (Weiss, 2014). Elucidating the relationships among different actors and levels of governance, and how these relationships shape the protection of rights and political participation of social groups (including women, young people, indigenous peoples and marginal communities), or fail to do so and reproduce inequalities and conflict, is crucial for the identification of inclusive and responsive development strategies.

1) What governance arrangements best empower local communities to shape development in their area?
2) How can the accountability and capacity of parliaments be strengthened in low- and middle-income countries?

3) What support or alliances do women leaders and politicians need in the Global South and how can they best be provided or enabled?

4) What are the most effective ways to encourage women's political participation in contexts of resistance to gender equality?

5) What interventions promote youth participation in development and how can they be best operationalised?

6) How can governments engage effectively with citizens who mobilise outside the formal arena of politics and in informal spaces of participation?

7) What are the consequences for development outcomes of the shift from national sovereignty to global governance?

8) To what extent are human rights conventions successful in protecting vulnerable groups?

9) How do different actors and agencies deal with conflicts between competing rights' categories and rights' holders, and how can these conflicts be addressed?

10) How can businesses be encouraged to better understand and deliver on human rights?

11) How can the rights of marginal and vulnerable groups be protected and enhanced in the process of large-scale infrastructure development?

12) How can the rights of geographically remote and/or mobile social groups be integrated and promoted in national development agendas?

13) Under what conditions are indigenous peoples best able to protect their rights, including land rights?

14) What approaches most effectively protect and promote the rights of children with disabilities and significant mental and physical impairments?

15) What are the barriers to the full realisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights and how can they be overcome?

3.2 Environmental sustainability

Deforestation, land degradation, biodiversity loss and natural resource overexploitation exacerbate poverty and deepen inequalities (MEA, 2005), as do natural disasters such as floods, droughts, storms and landslides (Wisner et al., 2004). These problems are further compounded by the increasing impacts of climate change with clear ramifications for natural systems and societies around the globe (IPCC, 2014). The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) and the Stern Review (2007) have drawn attention to the links between environmental health, human wellbeing and the quality of the economy. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, an international framework for disaster resilience endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2005, links natural disasters to loss of life, and loss of social, economic and environmental assets (UNISDR, 2005). Over the past 20 years, the commodification of ecosystems and their services (for example, Costanza et al., 1997; Heynen et al., 2004; Brockington and Duffy, 2011) has dominated

environmental policy debates and fed into the design of compensation and incentive mechanisms aiming to address economic development and natural resource conservation at local and regional levels. Such initiatives, however, may have adverse unintended consequences and pay too little attention to questions of distribution and inequality (Peet, Watts and Robbins, 2010).

16) How can models of compensation best address the unequal distribution of responsibilities for, and costs of, climate change?
17) How can different institutional structures effectively support climate compatible development strategies?
18) What are the effects of commodifying nature and environmental assets on environmental sustainability, human wellbeing, and the environmental agenda?
19) How do public perceptions of climate change impact on actions at the individual level?
20) What are the impacts of interventions to mitigate climate change (for example, Payments for Ecosystem Services and the biofuel sector) on human wellbeing and natural systems?
21) What evidence is there of transferable good practices in balancing biodiversity and livelihood priorities?
22) What are the barriers to generating simple yet representative indicators that combine elements of social and economic development with metrics of environmental health and sustainability?
23) What are the most effective approaches to ensure the wider public pays attention to, and acts on, early warnings related to natural hazards?

3.3 Food security, land and agriculture

Meeting current and future food needs while reducing pressures on land and natural resources is one of society's greatest challenges (Godfray et al., 2010), yet unequal access to land remains one of the greatest causes of poverty, human insecurity and conflict. Poverty, food security and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked to the agricultural sector. The negative environmental (for example, Rudel et al., 2009) and social (for example, Weiner et al., 2014) impacts of large-scale, commercial agriculture are increasingly clear, and smallholder agriculture remains an important driver of land-cover change (Rudel et al., 2009). Small-scale farmers whose markets serve the needs of urban areas also form a large proportion of the world's poor and hungry, highlighting areas for both conflict and conciliation between socioeconomic and environmental concerns. Critically, there remain many gaps in our understanding of the kinds of policies and land-tenure systems that support diversified and resilient agricultural systems, sustainable rural livelihoods and resource use, and social inclusion (Williamson et al., 2010).

24) What investment mechanisms strengthen rural people's land rights and promote the diversification of food systems?
25) How best can land governance be made gender inclusive?
26) Under what conditions does greater land tenure security lead to more efficient, equitable and sustainable resource use?
27) How can international trade systems be incentivised to create a conducive environment for more stable and affordable local food systems?
28) How can the direct and indirect contributions of urban agriculture be maximised to create more food secure and sustainable cities?
29) What innovations in smallholder agriculture can be successfully transferred to large-scale agricultural production systems, and vice-versa?
30) Under what circumstances and for whom is increasing smallholder agricultural productivity more cost-effective at reducing poverty than the expansion of large-scale commercial agriculture?
31) What are the most cost-effective approaches of sustainably increasing the agriculture productivity and incomes of small-scale farmers?
32) How can agro-ecological farming practices (including those that are not easily commodifiable) be effectively scaled up to address local and global food needs?
33) What can be learned from successful examples of large-scale commercial agriculture's role in incentivising more sustainable forms of production?
34) What are the most promising agricultural technological innovations and how can they be effectively shared and implemented?

3.4 Energy and natural resources

Global, regional and local production and consumption patterns continue to increase demands for energy and natural resources, providing challenges and opportunities for poverty reduction, economic development, sustainability and social cohesion. Unequal access to natural resources and to the revenues generated by their exploitation, combined with the socio-environmental impacts of extractive industries, are among the main causes of social conflicts in the Global South. These conflicts have fueled debates on the institutional and governance arrangements for natural resources management most likely to generate sustainable and equitable socioeconomic outcomes, and the kinds of social and political environments that can support them (Bebbington and Bury 2009; Cuba et al., 2014; Sawyer and Gomez, 2012; Hujo, 2012). How natural resources and energy systems are governed will also have significant implications for climate change and will be inextricably related to geopolitics and international structures of power (Mitchell, 2012).

35) What strategies address the concentrated and unequal distribution of natural resources and what impact do they have on poverty, inequality and conflict?

36) How do states create favourable policy environments to deliver a fair distribution of rents and ensure sustainable resource management within extractive industries?

37) Under what conditions can natural resource extraction and exploitation deliver joint social and environmental benefits?

38) How can natural resource extraction and exploitation support inclusive, accountable and broad-based development?

39) How can resource dependent economies diversify and/or become more resilient?

40) How can reliable, universal, sustainable and affordable electricity services best be financed to the rural poor?

41) What mechanisms would ensure a faster transition to a sustainable, carbon-free global economy?

42) How can marine resources located outside of sovereign exclusive economic areas be used sustainably and equitably?

3.5 Conflict, population dynamics and urbanisation

Peace, security and political stability are key conditions for sustainable development. Given that a third of the world's poorest live in countries lacking these conditions (Manning and Trzeciak-Duval, 2010), it was surprising that conflict and fragility did not feature within the MDGs (Wisor, 2012). This gap was an important justification for including them within the SDGs (goal 16, UN, 2014). In recent years, the promotion and protection of human dignity and wellbeing has faced particularly severe challenges in situations where instability and conflict prevail (Zürcher, 2012), with gendered impacts often playing out against women and girls (UNRISD, 2005). Changing population dynamics present major challenges to development policy and practice. Global population growth (predicted to reach 9.5 billion by 2050), increasing urbanisation and the intensification of intra- and inter-national migratory flows will increasingly affect local, national and global governance, provision of resources and basic services (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012; Geiger and Pécoud, 2013; UNPD, 2012; 2013; World Bank, 2009). Both new and old conflicts are generating particularly fragile scenarios within and beyond country borders, potentially increasing the numbers of displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers.

43) How can women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict settings be strengthened?

44) What are the development implications of clandestine illegal activities, such as drug trade, prostitution, money laundering, smuggling, human trafficking and trade in counterfeit medication?

45) What are the most effective policies and mechanisms (from local to global) that combat human trafficking?

46) How are information and data collection systems linked to the criminalisation and control of migrants and asylum seekers?

47) How can the circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees living in lower- and middle-income countries be improved?
48) How are new migration regimes and patterns influencing the socio-economic status and family dynamics of those who stay in their countries of origin?
49) What policies maximise the potential developmental benefits of migration while offsetting its negative consequences?
50) What factors best explain the reduction in urban violence where it has occurred?
51) How will governments in lower-income countries be supported to ensure that informal settlements in urban areas are included in political, economic, health and social planning and development?
52) How can local governments with limited budgets respond to the needs of fast growing metropolitan areas?
53) How can architecture, urban design and planning address social sustainability most effectively and contribute to the creation of social equality and inclusion?

3.6 Economic growth, employment and the private sector

The tone of the high-level discussions at the 2012 UN-led Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the recently published draft of the new SDGs (UN, 2014) reflect governments' reticence to comply with targets they fear will restrict their potential for future economic growth (Tollefson, 2012). The role of industrialisation and the business sector in driving economic development will likely be a central pillar of the post-2015 development agenda, yet the place and role of the informal economy for development remains a challenge. Ensuring the development of new inclusive models of growth and reforms to the international financial system are crucial dilemmas facing an increasingly globalised, but highly segmented and unequal, global economy. Supporting institutions and legal arrangements that can effectively ensure labour rights of adults and young people, and protect children from exploitation, will be key for an inclusive and sustainable development agenda (Barrientos et al., 2011; UNICEF, 2011).

54) What factors can influence the transition from a global economic system driven by consumption to one driven by the creation of wellbeing and equity?
55) Which type of policies or strategies carried out by expanding middle-income countries have proven to be more effective for the promotion of a more inclusive and equitable economic growth?
56) What evidence is there that private sector finance has played a major role in the provision of basic services such as access to water, sanitation or energy, for the poorest quintile in lower-income countries?

57) How is the shift from corporate social responsibility to sustainable and socially responsible business practices impacting on business and development outcomes?

58) How can the expansion of small and medium enterprises in lower-income countries be best supported?

59) How can we ensure that private sector investment in climate compatible development is both pro-poor and equitable?

60) What effective policy mechanisms can lower- and middle-income countries adopt to ensure multinational companies comply with tax obligations?

61) What kinds of controls in the Global North have proven effective in reducing tax avoidance by multinational companies operating in lower-income countries and how can they be improved?

62) In cases where opportunities for youth employment have increased, what are the causes and what are the lessons?

63) Which are the most dynamic sectors for 'decent' work in different rural and urban contexts and what transferable lessons can be learnt for job creation?

64) How can labour rights and decent working conditions be ensured within and across global supply chains?

65) What are the most effective ways to recognise and address the unequal burden of unpaid care work and facilitate women's participation in paid employment?

66) What new approaches addressing child labour most effectively promote children's rights and wellbeing?

3.7 Social and economic inequalities

In spite of progress on many aspects of economic and social development, inequalities of different kinds remain a persistent feature within and between societies. In 2014, the United Nations Population Department (UNPD) reported that over 75% of the world's population lives in societies in which income is more unequally distributed than in the 1990s (UNPD, 2013). Income inequality maps in complex ways to other forms of inequality, including (dis)abilities, culture, identity, race and gender (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Tackling inequality in its different forms can have major benefits for individual and social wellbeing including in health, education and nutrition (WHO, 2008), poverty reduction, as well as the stability of public institutions and political dynamics (UNRISD, 2010; UNPD, 2013). Reducing discrimination and exclusion, and monitoring progress towards more inclusive societies, are essential elements of the post-2015 agenda (World We Want, 2013).

67) Under what conditions do elites become committed to the reduction of poverty and inequality?

68) What measures have been effective in increasing tax revenues in lower- and middle-income countries?

69) What social and political coalitions are associated with equitable growth and poverty reduction?

70) What effective social safety nets will be needed to protect men, women and children from chronic poverty and future threats linked to climate change?

71) What role do social movements and community organisations play in sustainably lifting the poorest in middle-income countries out of poverty?

72) Has the integration of mobile technologies into development programming improved development outcomes for the most disadvantaged women, men and children? If so, where, how and why?

73) How are marginalised groups accessing and using information and communication technologies to produce and use data in ways that strengthen their empowerment?

74) What can be done to build socioeconomic resilience of the emerging middle classes in lower- and middle-income countries?

75) Which family policies most effectively promote gender and age equality within households?

76) What is the role of social and women's movements in increasing women's ownership of assets?

77) What has been the impact of the 'Girl Effect'[5] on gender analysis and initiatives, and what are the implications for boys and young men?

78) What are the most effective methods and programmes for engaging men and boys as allies in combating all forms of violence against women and girls?

79) What is the impact of economic empowerment on violence against women and girls?

3.8 Health and education

Improving the health of the world population and ensuring access to education for all by creating conditions that support efforts towards universal healthcare and primary education are at the core of the MDGs and the post-2015 agenda (Burnett and Felsman, 2012; Vega, 2013). Despite significant progress in some areas, issues related to quality, accessibility, equity and governance of primary health care services and basic education still remain unsolved (Easterly, 2009). These issues are likely to increase as growing populations, changing demographics and evolving disease patterns put further pressure on health and education systems. One of the main challenges is to ensure efficient and effective allocation of resources. A robust

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5. This term refers to the positive impact (ripple effect) of girls' inclusion in education, health and economic investment on the prevention of other issues such as child marriage, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and the break of the inter-generational cycle of poverty (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011).

response to global health issues, including sexual and reproductive rights, mental health, non-communicable and communicable diseases, access to medicines and nutrition requires the strengthening of health systems and the implementation of initiatives that support governance at national and international levels (de Savigny and Adam, 2009; Adam and de Savigny, 2012). Similarly, an inclusive education agenda focusing on quality pre- and post-primary education that promotes enrolment, retention and relevance to emerging job markets will be critical.

80) What are the most effective approaches to ensure that the combined burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases is addressed in lower- and middle- income countries?

81) How can the intellectual property system be transformed so that affordable medicines become available to all?

82) What is the impact of climate change on patterns of ill-health and the burden of disease?

83) What systems of Universal Health Coverage are most effective at providing quality health care for all?

84) What are the most effective approaches to reduce stigma-based discrimination by health workers towards vulnerable groups?

85) What are the most effective new approaches to support the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents?

86) What has been the impact of different strategies and approaches towards mental health in lower-income countries?

87) What factors influence healthy food choices (including taste, culture, prices, marketing, access, control and food budgets) and what policies and interventions can encourage these?

88) How can educational systems be adapted and developed to maximise young people's capacities for sustainable livelihoods through formal and informal employment and/or entrepreneurship?

89) What are the most effective approaches for the delivery of locally appropriate, affordable and high quality education for children and young people with disabilities?

90) How does the transformation of higher education influence development pathways?

91) What interventions are the most successful in improving enrolment, retention and achievement of girls in high/secondary school?

3.9 Development policies, practices and institutions

Over the last two decades, globalisation and a reconfiguration of the global political economy that has strengthened the role of both private actors and emerging sovereign actors such as China and India, have reshaped international co-operation frameworks and dramatically changed the context in which development stakeholders operate. Philanthropic foundations, business and emerging powers are

becoming increasingly engaged in shaping the direction of development and the delivery of specific initiatives. These changes are blurring the traditional boundaries between donors and recipients of aid and challenging the longstanding supremacy of Western states for determining what 'development' consists of (Idemudia, 2008; Zimmermann and Smith, 2011). New economic and political challenges associated with this changing global order will influence how future development strategies and targets are conceptualised, implemented and supported (de Haan, 2010; Manning, 2006; Six, 2009; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2013). At the same time, addressing the role of culture and differing understandings of development itself will also be crucial for innovations in development theory and practice.

92) What are the development and accountability impacts of the increased role of and funding provided by philanthropists and philanthropic foundations?

93) How can the prominence and momentum of South-South co-operation be maximised and what will its impact on development practices and discourses be?

94) How can 'common but differentiated responsibilities' best be operationalised to deliver the SDGs?

95) What happens to national NGOs and civil society after international aid is declining or withdrawn?

96) How can aid interventions avoid incentivising short-term development strategies in place of long-term ones?

97) How can we better integrate human dignity and respect into development policy and practice?

98) How can development initiatives best incorporate arts and culture?

99) How do different countries and cultures vary in how they conceptualise, define and operationalise 'development', and what is the significance of this for development policies and practices?

100) What are the emerging theoretical and empirical (post-development) paradigms challenging mainstream international development frameworks, and what are their contributions and limitations?

4   Discussion

No shortlist can cover all possible development issues where further research is needed (nor could one expect full agreement on an exclusive list). The 100 questions presented here address a varied combination of long-standing problems that have hindered development for decades as well as newer challenges. For example, well-established concerns about the rights of women, and of vulnerable groups such as poor workers, small-scale farmers, people with disabilities, children and ethnic minorities feature alongside emerging issues, including the role of business in protecting human rights, and information and communication technologies as tools for empowerment and social integration. Similarly, traditional concerns linked to

rural livelihoods, land tenure and agricultural production are presented together with environmental sustainability, natural resource extraction, urbanisation, food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The inclusion of long-standing questions in the shortlist highlights the intractability of certain issues and the necessity for them to remain central in future research agendas.

The shortlist also reflects a progressive shift from economic development towards a multifaceted and more complex way of understanding social change. While civil society and the empowerment of marginalised populations are recognised as key for development, questions on new actors, including the private sector and emerging economic powers, feature heavily in this shortlist: the complex and contested role of middle-income countries as donors and partners, as well as recipients of aid, is one such example (Alonso et al., 2014). Furthermore, the questions shortlisted also reflect the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into a wide range of development areas, helping to cement the view that gender should be considered central to future development initiatives.

Of particular importance is that a substantial number of the submitted questions (102) went beyond the initially prescribed themes and specifically challenged the appropriateness of current development institutions and policies, or the epistemological foundations of development itself. Collectively, these questions highlight a critical need for a deeper reflection on paradigms underpinning international development practices, the long-debated reform of global institutions and the significance of contemporary economic and political scenarios for the development agenda. In one sense, these questions constitute a key outcome of the consultation. Not only do these questions raise important issues in themselves but they also highlight a potential limitation of the many other post-2015 priority-setting exercises using pre-determined themes. Allowing participants to think outside of pre-determined thematic boxes might raise issues that scrutinise broader concepts of development and their underlining assumptions.

Although the shortlisting guidelines were flexible enough to allow some of the questions raising deeper, integral issues to make it to the final shortlist (see Section 3.9), the consultation – like similar previous exercises (for example, Sutherland et al., 2010; Sutherland et al., 2013) – mainly provided a collective snapshot of specific experts' viewpoints. This was mainly due to the criteria and instructions that guided the exercise, which encouraged the formulation and selection of questions with factual answers that could be addressed within the framework of a research project, while trying to keep the discussion within the boundaries set by the post-2015 consultation campaign. Although pragmatic, these criteria are unlikely to generate questions that examine the theoretical assumptions of current development paradigms, and their systems of beliefs and values. Asking such fundamental questions more routinely could lead to innovative problem framings and solutions (Chappell et al., 2013), and addressing these will be critical for the success of any credible, long-term strategies aiming to promote sustainable and socially just development (Fischer et al., 2012). Co-production exercises such as this one should, therefore, be considered jointly with more fundamental critiques of development paradigms and institutional frameworks.

Problems of representation and inclusiveness are particularly critical when dealing with international development, where historically unbalanced power relations between the Global North and South, colonist and colonised, metropolitan and rural remain unsolved issues. Although individuals and organisations based in Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific proposed about a quarter of all questions submitted to the consultation, we witnessed relatively low response rates (~5%) from the wide range of organisations and individuals that were invited to take part during the consultation phase. While this response rate falls within the norm of online surveys (Shih and Fan, 2009), the different levels of engagement of North- and South-based individuals and institutions cannot be explained without considering linguistic, cultural and technological barriers. Engagement fatigue, unease with similar contemporary consultation efforts and a lack of immediate benefits relative to the investments in terms of time and intellectual commitment might also have played a role. Although untestable in the framework of this project, it is likely that a consultation with a different disciplinary and geographic composition of participants (for example, with a higher rate of participation from the global South) could have proposed both a different set of initial questions and a final shortlist. Adapting a similar methodology to address more specific regional and sub-national contexts is, therefore, likely to engage national and local stakeholders more effectively, and in doing so, increase the degree of inclusiveness and help overcome the limitations of a consultation exercise with global aspirations. Such regionally targeted consultations would provide data for cross-regional comparisons and be useful for aligning research, policy and development initiatives to locally determined needs.

Inclusiveness and representation in consultative processes depend on a large number of factors, including methodological design, mobilised resources and convocation capacity, and are notoriously difficult to achieve. Furthermore, public participation mechanisms tend to suffer from self-selection bias and are often regarded as unrepresentative of the larger community of stakeholders and disconnected from actual decision-making (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Fung, 2006). Despite their inherent structural limitations, consultations such as this one present a way of collaboratively identifying priorities and knowledge gaps that are based on deliberation among and across different stakeholders communities. The value of these kind of research exercises ultimately relies on the ability of a variety of stakeholders to reach consensus around a set of research priorities put forward by large group of actors. It is, therefore, critical to make efforts to increase the engagement of as varied a set of stakeholders as possible, especially from the Global South.

We envisage our list of 100 questions contributing to inform the post-2015 agenda and future development-related research priorities of international, governmental and non-governmental organisations. But, perhaps more centrally, we believe that these questions can act as starting points for debate, research and collaboration between academics, practitioners and policy-makers. Future research and sharing of existing knowledge can provide answers to some of the questions that we have collectively identified as important for the future international development agenda and, therefore, likely to be able to make a significant impact on the implementation of the SDGs. We also believe that the process of co-production

that we set out is essential for successfully and effectively tackling key challenges facing the international community, and that more efforts should be made to increase the participatory and transdisciplinary culture generation of international development research.

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Appendix 1: Contributing organisations

1) AbleChildAfrica, United Kingdom
2) Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP), United States
3) Africa Research Institute, United Kingdom
4) Age International, United Kingdom
5) Amnesty International, United Kingdom
6) Association of Commonwealth Universities, United Kingdom
7) British Council, United Kingdom
8) British NGOs for Overseas Development (BOND), United Kingdom
9) Building and Social Housing Foundation, United Kingdom
10) Bureau of Integrated Rural Development, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana
11) CARE International, United Kingdom and Ethiopia
12) CARITAS Europe, Belgium
13) Catholic Aid Agency for England and Wales (CAFOD), United Kingdom
14) Caucus for Children's Rights, Tanzania
15) Centre for Engineering and Industrial Design (CIDESI), Mexico
16) Centre for HIV Prevention and Research, Kenya
17) Centre for the Development of People, Ghana
18) Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Eonómica y Social (CERES), Bolivia
19) Clark University, United States
20) Clash International, Ghana and United States
21) Concern Worldwide, United Kingdom
22) Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores de Comercio Justo, Colombia
23) Cornerstone International, United States
24) Deakin University, Australia
25) Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Germany
26) Economic Policy Research Centre, Uganda
27) European Commission, Belgium
28) Everychild, United Kingdom
29) Fedesarrollo, Colombia
30) Food for the Hungry, United Kingdom

31) Foundation Adamfo Ghana, The Netherlands and United Kingdom
32) Friends of the Earth, United Kingdom
33) Global Vision International, Kenya
34) Health Poverty Action, United Kingdom
35) iDe, Zambia
36) International Institute for Environment and Development, United Kingdom
37) Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), France
38) International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal
39) International Civil Society Centre, Germany
40) International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) Network, United States, India and Uganda
41) International HIV/AIDs Alliance, United Kingdom
42) International NGO Training and Research Centre, United Kingdom
43) International Rescue Committee, United States
44) Irise International, United Kingdom and Uganda
45) Islamic Relief Worldwide, United Kingdom
46) KPMG, Australia
47) Leuphana University, Germany
48) London International Development Centre (LIDC), United Kingdom
49) Lund University, Sweden
50) Macalester College, United States
51) Medical Research Council, United Kingdom
52) Nadlow, Lithuania
53) Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC), The Netherlands
54) Newcastle University, United Kingdom
55) One Acre Fund, United States
56) Open University, United Kingdom
57) Overseas Development Institute, United Kingdom
58) Pan African Institute for Development - West Africa (PAID-WA), Cameroon
59) Planet Earth Institute, United Kingdom and Angola
60) Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru (PUCP), Peru
61) Positive Runway, United Kingdom
62) Practical Action, United Kingdom
63) Radboud University, The Netherlands
64) Recrear International Youth Organisation, Canada
65) Regarding Humanity, United States
66) Retrak, United Kingdom
67) Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health International, United Kingdom
68) School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), United Kingdom
69) Secretariat of the International Land Coalition, Italy
70) Sense International, United Kingdom
71) 3SolarAid, United Kingdom

72) The Brooke, United Kingdom
73) The Brookings institution, United States
74) The Humanitarian Centre, United Kingdom
75) The James Hutton Institute, United Kingdom
76) The Postharvest Education Foundation, United States
77) The Vegan Society, United Kingdom
78) Think Universal Power, United Kingdom
79) Trent University, Canada
80) UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS), United Kingdom
81) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bolivia
82) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Argentina
83) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Slovakia
84) United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Kyrgystan
85) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Switzerland
86) Universidad Federal Fluminense (UFF), Brazil
87) Università Iuav di Venezia, Italy
88) University College London, United Kingdom
89) University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
90) University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
91) University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
92) University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
93) University of Leeds, United Kingdom
94) University of Liverpool, United Kingdom
95) University of Nigeria, Nigeria
96) University of Pittsburgh, United States
97) University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
98) University of Warwick, United Kingdom
99) University of Washington, United Kingdom
100) Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), United Kingdom
101) Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR), The Philippines
102) World Vision, United Kingdom
103) Y Care International, United Kingdom
104) Young People We Care, Ghana

An additional five institutions, including governmental agencies, academic institutions and NGOs based in the United Kingdom, Finland, South Africa and Mali contributed questions but chose to remain anonymous.