

An intersectional focus on inequality and inequity in the framework of the 2030 Agenda

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Abstract: This qualitative study proposes an intersectional focus as a research methodology for analysing the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which describe situations of inequality and inequity in access, use, and as rights, through a holistic, intersectional focus. Its aim is to identify the dimensions underpinning the concept of inequality in the framework of the targets of the 2030 Agenda, and, based on a systematic analysis, to search for the possible degree of interrelation between the environmental, economic and social dimensions to identify possible indicators that currently comprise the inequality dimension of human development.

This requires a methodological focus that goes beyond the transversal configuration of the SDGs to enable the search for a potential interconnection between different elements that provide answers and establish synergies, in order to identify the impact of each of them in the social, environmental and economic sphere. An intersectional focus is, therefore, an appropriate analytical tool for studying complex questions that can only be explained with a high degree of rationality, adding the environmental dimension to the others after performing the analysis to shape the concept of inequality.

Keywords: Inequality, Equity, Sustainable Development, Intersectionality

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Intersectionality, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 20th century, is an approach that makes it possible to identify synergies between different social structures, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, biodiversity, the economy, etc., and which may allow for the “analysis of (...) specific inequalities” [1] (p.5).

In order to identify inequality, it is necessary to understand that it “begins at birth, defines the freedom and opportunities of children, adults and elders, and permeates those of the next generation,” [2] (p. iii). Some of these inequalities are present in life expectancies, access to public services, health care and quality education [3, 4].

According to UNICEF [5] (p.3), “inequality is a justifiable reflection of differences in ability and effort”. Therefore, since it does not relate simply to the economic aspect, it is not enough to lift people out of poverty to eradicate inequality, since although “great strides have been made – poverty halved between 1990 and 2015 – inequality continues to grow” [6] and extreme poverty still affects 736 million people, representing 11% of the world’s population [7].

People at risk of poverty are those who have an equivalised as 60% of the mean national equivalised disposable income after social transfers. This also affects other aspects of human development, as “new crises, floods and drought have resulted in an increase of 11 per cent in people facing food insecurity since 2016” [8] (p.112), and it is necessary to “address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons” [9] (p.15).

In fact, “in 2019, 6.9 per cent (or 47 million) children under 5 were affected by wasting, or acute undernutrition” [10] (p. 27), while in the same year, “5.6 per cent (or 38 million) children under age 5 worldwide were overweight” [10] (p. 27). Consequently, “one in three children under the age of 5 is stunted, wasted or overweight and, in some cases, suffers from a combination of two of these forms of malnutrition” [8] (p.16) and, at least, “340 million [suffer] from the hidden hunger of vitamin and mineral deficiencies” [11] (p. 35). Therefore, “globally, the burden of malnutrition in all its forms remains a challenge” [11] (p.16).

As for social services, 29% of the world’s population did not have comprehensive coverage in 2017 [12] and “less than one third of the world’s population is covered by comprehensive social security systems, with women over-represented among those who remain excluded” [13] (p. 108).

In fact, “globally, only 41.1 per cent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit, with large variations across regions; in Africa, less than 16 per cent of childbearing women are effectively covered” [13]

(p. 160) by a social protection scheme [14], even though “in sub-Saharan Africa, the adolescent birth rate remains at 101 births annually per 1,000 women” [10] (p. 29).

Recent reports state that “in 2016, there were still 114 million children aged 5 to 14 years in employment” [15] (p. 3) and in the same year, “108 million children aged between 5 and 17 were engaged in agricultural labour, accounting for 71 per cent of all child labour” [8] (pp.20-21). In line with this, UN Women (2019) notes that there are 54 million children aged between 5 and 14 who do at least 21 hours of unpaid work per week, two third of whom are girls. This has a negative impact on children’s ability to attend school and benefit from it. In the long term, this hinders the growth of an economy in a period [15].

Nonetheless, economic growth does not necessarily lead to social development or reduced differences between rich and poor, nor does it necessarily lead to a reduction in social exclusion. López’s analysis [17] (p.179) regarding access to education is an example of this:

Children who live in conditions of extreme poverty, the excluded, those displaced by wars, indigenous children from communities threatened by the crisis of their subsistence economies attend school with far fewer resources than children from sectors that are more highly integrated into society, and the great majority attend precarious institutions, with less well-trained teachers, less equipment and limited educational resources. These children, in general, have fewer days of class and spend fewer hours per day at school.

UNESCO [18] (p. 6) estimates that “258 million children, adolescents and youth, or 17% of the global total, are not in school”. Of these, “three quarters lived in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia” [10] (p.32). In fact, “completion rates stand at 85% in primary, 73% in lower secondary and 49% in upper secondary education” [18] (p. 27). Furthermore, children with sensory, physical or intellectual disabilities “constitute 15% of the out-of-school population” [19] (p.10) and are less likely to attend school than children who do not have disabilities [18].

At present, the effect of the digital divide during the COVID-19 pandemic must be added to these data, as it has had a negative impact in the field of education, worsening inequality and, consequently inequity. So, although 55% of low-income countries opted for online distance learning in primary and secondary education, only 12% of households in the less developed countries have access to the internet at home. Lower-technology approaches have also been unable to guarantee continuity of education. Among the poorest 20% of homes in Ethiopia, only 7% had a radio and none had a television. In general, around 40% of low and lower-middle-income countries have not supported students at risk of exclusion. In France, up to 8% of students lost touch with their teachers after three weeks of lockdown [18] (p.16).

Finally, it is important to note that there are data that reflect disparities between genders, as “globally, around 5.5 million more girls than boys of primary school age were out of school in 2018” [10] (p. 32), although at a worldwide level there appears to be parity in enrolment, from pre-primary to upper secondary. It has been observed that “in the bottom quarter of low-income countries, at most 60 girls are enrolled in upper secondary school per 100 boys. In lower-middle-income countries, gender disparities may be at the expense of girls or boys: At most, 92 girls per 100 boys are in the bottom quarter, compared with 91 boys per 100 girls in the top quarter” [18] (p.30). This seems to vary in adult education, as “in all countries except Denmark, women were more likely to mention conflicts with family responsibilities” [18] (p. 28) when continuing to study, which suggests that they continue to assume the role of carers.

We must accept that currently, and as a consequence of inequality, there is inequity since not all people are provided with what they need in accordance with their situations and contexts. In line with Bolívar [19], regarding all people as equal and offering the same to everyone could result in unequal treatment of those who are in a more vulnerable situation. Accordingly, equity should be guaranteed, as this is sensitive to the differences that exist between human beings [19].

Equity is currently conceived of as a social demand that calls for a more just and equitable society, bringing together targets based on justice and equality [20]. However, it is important to understand that the terms “equity” and “equality” are not synonyms, since, as Sánchez & Ballester [21] (p.99) state:

what is just is not always compatible with a concept of equity in which it is understood that measures must be implemented when faced with barriers, situations or the like that do not allow people a decent life. Accordingly, there is a tension between justice (which assumes an ideal of equality) and difference (which considers the diversity of situations and needs).

Do all of these situations of inequality have a shared origin? Are there interrelated factors that predispose a person to a situation of inequality? These are some of the questions the present research will attempt to answer, based on an intersectional analysis of the targets of the 2030 Agenda.

1.2. Human development and global inequality

In the 21st century, despite the generalised belief (feeling) that we have achieved high levels of development, there are still many challenges we must confront to ensure equity in our societies and the globalised world, considering the needs and conditions of each person.

Current environmental pressures on the planet are increasing the global imbalances that are already present, thus aggravating social imbalances so that inequalities in human development can be expected in the coming years [2].

To eliminate this situation completely, it is necessary to “substantially decrease the direct economic losses (...) caused by disaster (...), with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations” [9] (p. 22), as it is estimated that “between 3 million and 16 million people will fall into poverty by 2030 because of climate change.” [14] (p. 8). This leads us to set aside the approach that interprets the planet’s problems as compartmentalised so that we can consider their causes and solutions from a multidimensional focus, opting to assume that current imbalances are interconnected with a twin social and environmental aspect.

The current situation of alarm regarding our societies and the world is more complex, much less linear and much more dynamic than the focus that was formerly dominant, in which biodiversity and its non-uniform or equal distribution was not part of the Human Development Index (HDI). Organisations such as the UNDP argue that an update to the HDI is required, adding planetary pressures to the dimensions on which it was based, creating a new concept called the Planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI) [22].

The focus centred on Human Development that underpinned the HDI, defining human development as the expansion of “human freedoms and opening more choices for people to chart their own development paths according to their diverse values” [22] (p. 6). This reminds us that economic growth is more of a means than an end in itself, and that it is not the only dimension that guarantees the equal and equitable division of the planet’s material resources. Instead, two basic capacities can affect inequality, namely a healthy life and access to education, with both of these categories becoming ends in themselves.

The bases on which the concept of Human Development is founded will be crucial for enabling the empowerment of people when defining and following their own paths in order to lead a full life. In order to do so, in light of current poverty figures [14], other dimensions should be considered, such as the capacity to act and values, paying particular attention to our interactions with nature and our stewardship of the planet.

We constantly live our lives between social, economic and environmental spaces that shape our development, both individually and globally, and at the same time highlight the equality and inequality, equity and inequity of the world. These three development contexts should be considered as nodes in an interdependent sociological network that marks the strengths and weaknesses of the planet and of human development.

This human development focus underpins a systemic outlook that provides the foundation of the study presented in this article relating to the Agenda 2030 targets and the semantic fields that, in the authors’ understanding, define people’s rights to be able to demarcate the narrow path between equality and inequality, as well as the global trends that currently project situations of inequity in certain groups.

Current challenges, which are recognised as being of various types, have multiple interconnected dimensions, and we will only be able to identify the current needs of the planet, and the dynamic relationship between them from the perspective of a study using an intersectional focus. It will not be possible to achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) if they are not interlinked with the rest of the SDGs, forming a systemic whole.

1.3. Intersectionality as an analytic instrument

After identifying some of the inequalities currently present and the different challenges countries face in reaching the SDGs in the framework of Agenda 2030, this study presents intersectionality as an analytic instrument from a methodological focus of intracategory complexity [23].

Taking Zapata [24] as a reference point, our aim is to perform a multidimensional analysis of the targets of the 2030 Agenda based on an evaluation instrument that allows an understanding of the complexity of the facts without falling into reductionism, and we conclude with a new concept of inequality from a multidimensional and intersectional perspective, woven into the search for systemic relationships between each of the Agenda 2030 targets. The cornerstone of the analytic focus will, therefore, be the study of the interconnected relationships between the SDGs.

Based on provisional use of defined categories, we attempt to account for the nature of relationships of inequality and centring our interpretation of them on how people’s experiences and opportunities are shaped by their belonging to different categories, to arrive at the deconstruction of the current term of inequality and show the porosity of its limits.

Ultimately, the concept of intersectionality, which forms the basis of the new definition of the concept of inequality, encourages reflexive analysis to develop a focus that starts from social inequalities in specific

contexts, and presents results based on the interaction of various markers of difference [24], thus configuring a structural analytical tool and acting as a search for a critical interpretation of interrelations and relations of inequality that occur at the individual, social and institutional levels [25].

From this critical and practical vision, this methodological approach helps to define explicit and implicit elements to identify the effects of the systems that generate inequality, inequity and injustice, and which form part of the social and economic and educational imaginary. Therefore, following the line proposed by Hill and Bilge [26], intersectionality as an analytic instrument “can enable a better understanding of the growing global inequality” (p.30) at the same time as contributing to the “understanding of inequality based on interactions between different categories” [26] (p.44), taking as a basis the social and economic context (p.48), and including the environmental context as the latest trends indicate [22]. It, therefore, represents a new focus contrasting with dichotomous and binary analyses. In effect,

Too often our frameworks conceptualize one person’s rights as coming at the expense of another person’s; development becomes about establishing and maintaining competitive advantage. In contrast, thinking about development from the perspective of intersectionality focuses attention on specific contexts, distinct experiences and the qualitative aspects of equality, discrimination and justice, permitting us to simultaneously work on behalf of ourselves and others [27] (p.3).

2. Materials and Methods

This qualitative study applies a content analysis [28] to the targets proposed by the United Nations in the resolution approved by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through processes of open coding of the data. This involved selecting the coding units, the rules for counting presence and establishing the basic study categories [29].

To do so, we subjected the 169 targets of the SDGs to qualitative processing, specifying the coding units and the counting rule, providing the categories on which the subsequent analysis is based. For the content analysis, proposed categories with identical characteristics were combined under a generic title called a code, giving the following analytic codes: education; work; social protection; health; food, production and consumption; ecosystem; property; environment; rights; and technology.

The process of categorisation was based on syntactic fields. We analysed these categories by assigning a uniform and appropriate criterion to each of the codes, which were defined in the codification process using the definitions by international bodies as a reference point for defining the corresponding coding units (Table 1) to narrow down the terms we searched for and subsequently analysed.

Table 1: Definitions of the codes used

Code	Definition	Syntactic fields
Education	This is a human right for all people [30], as it is the most effective means of reducing poverty and inequality and fostering social inclusion [31] through educational activities carried out in different settings [32]	Education
Work	This is the set of paid or unpaid human activities that procedure goods or services in an economy, or that satisfy the needs of a community or provide the necessary means of support for individuals [33]	Work Employment
Social protection	This requires policies and actions in different fields to promote the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights in all areas of human development (labour market, food, health, income, etc.) [34]	Social protection Vulnerability Poverty Risks Nutrition
Health	People should have a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, not merely an absence of disorders or illnesses [35]	Health
Food, production and consumption	This isa conscious and voluntary process that comprises the act of ingesting food to satisfy the need to eat [36] that all people have, thus meeting their needs and guaranteeing the sustainability of production.	Food Nutrition Production Consumption
Ecosystem	The combined physical and biological components of an environment. These organisms form complex sets of relationships and function as a unit as they interact with their physical environment [37]	Ecosystem Habitats
Property	This is a person’s right or ability to possess something and be able to dispose of it within legal limits [38].	Property Housing
Environment	This is the collection natural, social and cultural values existing in a particular place and time that influence the material and psychological life of humankind and the future of later generations [39]	Environment Water Air

		Soil
Technology	This is a set of theories and techniques that enable the practical use of scientific knowledge [40]	Technology
Rights	These are inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status [41], or any other status [41].	Rights

Source: own elaboration

We used version 7 of the ATLAS TI qualitative data analysis program to process the data to identify potential connections between the targets using these codes so we could subsequently evaluate the possible intersectional character of human inequality and inequity. We took as our starting position that the sum or convergence of various inequalities that come into play in the codes described is revealed as a new way of differentiating on the basis of a dynamic and procedural vision [42].

3. Results

The results obtained are presented in three blocks. The first block sets out the evidence for the representation of the codes on 108 occasions within the SDG targets, arranged in the following grouping: Social protection (22); Environment (15); Health (11); Technology (14); Ecosystem (10); Food, production and consumption (10), Rights (10); Work (9); Education (5); Property (3).

The second block covers which SDGs the codes used are present in (Table 2), considering the proposed definitions. For example, it is apparent that SDG 3. Good health and well-being, SDG 5. Gender equality, and SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth appear more, while SDG 7. Affordable and clean energy, SDG 10. Reduced inequalities, and SDG 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions appear less often.

Table 2: Codes present in the SDGs

SDG	Codes
1.No poverty	Social protection; Property; Rights
2.Zero hunger	Social protection; Food, production and consumption; Ecosystem; Environment.
3.Good health and well-being	Education; Health; Food, production and consumption; Environment; Rights.
4.Quality education	Education; Work; Social protection; Technology; Rights.
5.Gender equality	Work; Social protection; Health; Property; Technology; Rights.
6.Clean water and sanitation	Social protection; Ecosystem; Environment; Technology.
7.Affordable and clean energy.	Technology.
8. Decent work and economic growth	Work; Social protection; Food, consumption and production; Environment; Rights.
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Work; Technology.
10. Reduced inequalities	Social protection.
11. Reduced inequalities	Social protection; Property; Environment
12. Responsible production and consumption	Work; Health; Food, production and consumption; Environment.
13. Climate action	Education; social protection
14. Life below water	Health; Ecosystem; Technology; Rights.
15. Life on land	Social protection; Ecosystem; Environment.
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	Rights.
17. Partnerships for the goals.	Social protection; Technology; Rights

Source: own elaboration

The third block presents the transversal relationships between each code and the SDG targets (Table 3). The data analysis gives as a result a greater degree of convergence and interconnection in Social protection and Environment, while the Education; Property; Work; Ecosystem, Food, production and consumption; and Rights codes display fewer transversal relations.

Table 3: Transversal relationships of each code with the SDG targets

Code	Targets
Education	3.7 – 4.2 – 4.5 – 4.7 – 13.3
Work	4.4 – 5.4 – 8.3 – 8.5 – 8.7 – 8.8 – 8.b- 9.2- 12.b
Social protection	1.1 – 1.2 – 1.3 – 1.4 – 1.5 – 1.b – 2.2 – 2.3 – 4.5 – 5.4 – 6.2 – 8.5 – 8.8 – 8.b – 10.4 – 11.2 – 11.5 – 11.b – 13.1 – 15.9 – 17.15
Health	3.4 – 3.7 – 3.8 – 3.a – 3.b – 3.c – 3.d – 5.6 – 12.4 – 14.2 – 14.a
Food, production and consumption	2.2 – 2.3 – 2.4 – 2.a – 2.c – 3.5 – 8.4 – 12.3 – 12.a – 12.c
Ecosystem	2.4 – 4.2 – 6.6 – 14.2 – 15.1 – 15.4 – 15.5 – 15.8 – 15.9 – 15.a
Property	1.4 – 5.a – 11.1
Environment	2.4 – 3.3 – 3.9 – 6.1 – 6.3 – 6.4 – 6.6 – 6.a – 6.b – 8.4 – 11.5 – 11.6 – 12.4 – 15.1 – 15.3.
Technology	4.b – 5.b – 6. a – 7.a – 7.b – 9.4 – 9.a – 9.b – 9.c – 14.a – 17.6 – 17.7 – 17.8 – 17.16
Rights	1.4 – 3. b – 4.7 – 5.6 – 5.a – 8.8 – 14.5 – 14.c – 16.3 – 17.12

Source: own elaboration

The nodes in the networks obtained show that some codes, such as Health and Technology, have a somewhat limited presence within the SDG targets compared with codes such as Social protection and Environment.

However, health has a social, educational framework, and is interlinked with environmental indicators (WHO, 2001), and technology, as a set of theories and techniques, enables the practical use of scientific knowledge that behaves transversally in SDGs that we could classify as social, environmental and economic.

Of the synergies created, fewer transversal relationships are apparent in the Education, Work, Food, production and consumption, Ecosystem, Property and Rights codes.

This last is a clear example of interlinking of indicators that might lead to inequality as it almost completely cuts across the three dimensions of Sustainable Development: environmental, social justice and sustainable economy.

Having identified the transversality of the codes being studied in the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, we performed a search for possible interconnections to show flows of inequality and inequity with a marked systemic character within the SDGs as a group.

3.1. Interconnection between codes and SDG targets

This section presents the results obtained relating to the interconnection between the targets of the SDGs and the ten codes used (Table 4). It is important to note the evidence for intersectional relationships between most of the seventeen SDGs that comprise Agenda 2030 (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12,14 and 15) and, specifically, in 23 of their targets (1.4 – 2.2 – 2.3 – 2.4 – 3.7 – 3.b – 4.5 – 4.7 – 5.4 – 5.6 – 5.a – 6.6 – 6.a – 8.4 – 8.5 – 8.8 – 8.b – 11.5 – 12.4 – 14.2 – 14.a – 15.1 – 15.9). If we consider the highest degree of interconnection by targets, the ones that stand out are SDG 2. Zero hunger (13%), SDG 5. Gender equality (13%), and SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth (17%) are the ones with the most targets represented; while SDG 1. No poverty (4%), SDG 11. Sustainable cities and communities (4%) and SDG 12. Responsible production and consumption (4%) are represented less.

Table 4: Interconnection between codes and SDG targets

Codes	Interconnection
Education	3.7 – 4.5 – 4.7
Work	5.4 – 8.5 – 8.8 – 8.b
Social protection	1.4 – 2.2 – 2.3 – 4.5 – 5.4 – 8.5 – 8.8 -8.b – 11.5 – 15.9
Health	3.7 – 3.b – 5.6 – 12.4 – 14.2 – 14.a

Food, production and consumption	2.2 – 2.3 – 2.4 – 8.4
Ecosystem	2.4 – 6.6 – 14.2 – 15.1- 15.9
Property	1.4 – 5.a
Environment	2.4 – 6.6 – 6.a – 8.4 – 11.5 – 12.4 – 15.1
Technology	6.a – 14.a
Rights	1.4 – 3.b – 4.7 – 5.6 – 5.a – 8.8

Source: own elaboration

Target 1.4, corresponding to SDG 1. No poverty, is interconnected with the Social protection, Property and Rights codes. Targets 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 are part of SDG 2. Zero hunger, and have connections with four codes: Social protection; Food, production and consumption; Ecosystem; and Environment. On the one hand, the Social protection and Food, production and consumption codes are interconnected through targets 2.2 and 2.3. Meanwhile, the Food, production and consumption; Ecosystem; and Environment codes are interrelated through target 2.4.

Targets 3.7 and 3.b, belonging to SDG 3. Health and Well-being, are interconnected with three codes: Education, Health and Rights. On the one hand, the Education and Health codes are related through target 3.7, and, on the other, the Health and Rights codes are interconnected through target 3.b. Targets 4.5 and 4.7, corresponding to SDG 4. Quality education, are interconnected with three codes: Education, Social protection and Rights. The Education and Social protection codes are connected through target 4.5, and Education and Rights are linked through target 4.7.

Targets 5.4, 5.6 and 5.a, belonging to SDG 5. Gender equality, are interconnected with five codes: Work; Social protection; Health; Property; and Rights. Firstly, the Work and Social protection codes are interconnected through target 5.4. Secondly, the Health and Rights codes are connected through target 5.6. And lastly, the Property and Rights codes are interrelated through target 5.a.

Targets 6.6 and 6.a correspond to SDG 6. Clean water and sanitation, and are interconnected with three codes: Ecosystem, Environment and Technology. On the one hand, the Ecosystem and Environment codes are related through target 6.6, and, on the other, the Environment and Technology codes are interconnected through target 6.a. Targets 8.4, 8.5, 8.8 and 8.b, belonging to SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth, are related to five codes: Work; Social protection; Food, consumption and production; Environment; and Rights. The Food, production and consumption, and Environment codes are interrelated through target 8.4; the Work and Social Protection codes are interconnected through targets 8.5, 8.b and 8.8. In turn, this last target is connected to the Rights code.

Target 11.5, corresponding to SDG 11. Sustainable cities and communities, is interconnected with two codes: Social Protection and Environment. Target 12.4, belonging to SDG 12. Responsible production and consumption, is interconnected with two codes: Health and Environment. Targets 14.2 and 14.a, belonging to SDG 14. Life below water, are interconnected with three codes: Health, Ecosystem and Environment. On this occasion, the Health code is linked to the Ecosystem code through target 14.2. In turn, the Health code is related to the Technology code through target 14.a.

Targets 15.1 and 15.9, corresponding to SDG 15. Life on land, are interconnected with three codes: Social protection, Ecosystem and Environment. On the one hand, the Social protection code is interconnected with the Ecosystem code through target 15.9. In turn, this latter code is connected to the Environment code through target 15.1.

Finally, considering the proposed subject matter, the SDGs attempt to combat inequality through different targets (3.7, 5.6, 8.4, 12.4 and 15.9). Agenda 2030 explicitly reflects a new concern (contrasting with other previous documents) for inequity in targets 2.2, 2.4, 4.7, 5.4, 6.6, 6.a, 8.8, 8.b, 14.2, 14.a and 15.1. However, inequality and inequity are both present in targets 1.4, 2.3, 3.b, 4.5, 5.a, 8.5 and 11.5. By way of illustration, Table 5 shows what we have just explained:

Table 5: Targets for combating inequality and inequity

Inequality	3.7 – 5.6 – 8.4 – 12.4 – 15.9
Inequity	2.2 – 2.4 – 4.7 – 5.4 – 6.6 – 6.a – 8.8 – 8.b – 14.2 – 14.a – 15.1
Inequality and inequity	1.4 – 2.3 – 3.b – 4.5 – 5.a – 8.5 – 11.5

Source: own elaboration

We can see the high level of interconnection and interrelations between objectives, targets with a systematic and complex background.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Intersectionality a model that provides one of the best analytic perspectives for understanding how exclusion, inequality and inequity behave, thus helping to unlock a set of naturalised explanations for these elements of human development. By showing the interconnection and contextuality of the relationships of power or synergies that comprise the challenges facing the planet for 2030, this focus has enabled us to identify inequality as something more than the relationship between per capita income and marginalisation [43].

Consequently, intersectional focuses should be used both in analysis and in proposals for improvement that make it possible to design policies that are more in accordance with the needs of vulnerable people and, at the same time, position these policies within broader regulatory projects that make it possible to achieve social and economic equality [44].

Inequality, which cannot be explained without addressing more than one single dimension of human development, is a barrier to fulfilling Agenda 2030 [2], anchored to the slogan of “Leave no one behind” [45]. Taking this into account, the codes used in this research yield data that show the shared origins of some situations of inequality that affect and impact human development and the planet [22]. Therefore, flows of inequality and inequity are present in the SDG targets, which merge with one another and create conditions that make situations of inequality more likely, forming a systemic network between the social, the economic and the environmental.

So, starting with the social factor, flows of inequality and inequity are reflected in a lack of free access to all levels of education, limiting opportunities for people and violating the right to education, given that “globally, around 5.5 million more girls than boys of primary school age were out of school in 2018” [10] (p. 32).

This significant difference in levels of access brings with it other types of situation that aggravate the situation of inequality and inequity. Connected to this, it is important to mention that the lack of a safe working environment is still a challenge for society, underlining the ubiquity of the inequality caused by social and economic factors, as vulnerable groups such as migrants and young people are exposed to more risks and shortcomings in the quality of employment, as well as receiving inadequate earnings [10]. The same happens with people who live in slums and have “inadequate housing with limited or no access to basic infrastructure and services” [10] (p. 3), such as, for example, access to drinking water, a fundamental right that contributes to people’s well-being and which is still denied to “2.2 billion people around the world (...) including 785 million without basic drinking water” [10] (p. 36).

In addition to all of this, we must consider the factor of environmental biodiversity as a precursor of inequalities, as humans and the environment face phenomena that relate to natural disasters and climate change such as, for example, air and water pollution, which cause the premature deaths of 4.2 million people [10] and exacerbate poverty. This also has a direct impact on food production. As a consequence, it is reflected in an increase in hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition affecting millions of children [10], and so worsening “stunting and wasting (...)” [10] (p. 7), which affected 47 million children in 2019 [10] (p. 27).

Finally, in line with other international studies and reports, the present work notes the need to continue working to reduce damage to the environment, which affects “one fifth of the Earth’s land area (more than 2 billion hectares)” [10] (p. 54) and has an impact on the well-being of 3.2 billion people [10], and to separate this from economic growth. Likewise, the discourse based fundamentally on recognition and redistribution has a number of methodological weaknesses that affect how it notes, thinks about and acts on the complex forms inequality takes, both in minority groups and in the context of higher education [46] (p. 32), including the environmental dimension.

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