



The business of peace: Coca-Cola's contribution to stability, growth, and optimism

Hamish Banks

The Coca-Cola Company, Vice President Public Affairs & Communications – Eurasia and Africa

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Abstract This article reviews the role of a global commercial organization, The Coca-Cola Company, in contributing to national stability in developing markets through a strategic approach to social and economic contribution. The company's initiatives complement the role of policymakers, who are primarily responsible for the safety and prosperity of citizens, often using the Golden Triangle model that aligns government, civil society, and the private sector. Examples are drawn from the empowerment of women and youth; leverage of specialist expertise in water replenishment and in distribution and logistics; the impact of global standards of compliance; and the creation of high-value jobs throughout the expansive value chain. The Coca-Cola system is global in scale but multi-local in its operations, leveraging universal human traits with high relevance in individual markets.

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1. Coca-Cola: Promoting peace internationally

One morning in April of 2013, two delivery trucks simultaneously made their way through the streets of Lahore, Pakistan and Delhi, India, stopping outside a shopping mall in each city. From the back of each truck, a large, unmarked wooden crate was unloaded and workers set to assembling identical

red machines: Standing over six feet tall with an opaque glass front and a dispensing tray at the bottom, the machines sat silently as crowds of curious shoppers started to gather. With a flicker, the black screen of the machine in Lahore illuminated to reveal a live video feed of the scene in the mall in Delhi; at the same time, the machine in India came to life, revealing a view of the Lahore shopping center. A message flashed on the lower part of the machine in Pakistan: "Wave to someone in Delhi," it said. Across in India, viewers saw: "Wave to someone in Lahore." Intrigued, shoppers moved forward. One or two Pakistanis tentatively waved at the

E-mail address: habanks@coca-cola.com

screen and were rewarded by the image of Indian shoppers doing the same back to them. They edged closer, following further instructions from the machine: “Touch hands.” They reached out and placed a hand on the graphic outline of a palm and five fingers just as someone else did the same, almost three hundred miles away. “Do a dance for someone in Pakistan.” They danced, watching their counterparts animatedly doing the same, mirroring their moves, smiling and laughing. “Share a Coke with someone in Delhi.” All it took was one touch on the iconic image of a can and in Lahore and Delhi, two people were simultaneously delivered a cold, refreshing Coke. They raised their cans and toasted one another, abruptly realizing that, thanks to what became known as Small World Machines, this was likely the very first time they had ever connected in any way with another person from a country that their governments and the chattering classes had identified as their enemies.

In November of 2013, at a border crossing between Israel and the West Bank, a convoy of vans navigated its way through the tortuous process of exiting Israel and entering the Palestinian Territories. The lead van carried precious cargo: the original, unique FIFA World Cup Trophy, awarded to the winner of the quadrennial global soccer tournament. For the first time in history, Palestinians were to enjoy an opportunity to share in the magic of one of the world’s most prestigious sporting events. A roadshow that covered over 150 countries around the world, with all the exhibits and interactive games and hoopla, would bring joy and fun to thousands of ordinary Palestinians for a couple of days. And none of it would have happened without the collaboration and facilitation of the Israelis.

What did any of this have to do with business and peace? It would be hard to find more implacable national foes, but for a few days in Lahore, Delhi, Tel Aviv, and Ramallah, these stories illustrated that business and peace can go hand in hand. Part of the connection, obviously, was The Coca-Cola Company, but the essential ingredients were the universal values of curiosity and shared desires and interests—the *commonality of humanity*—that transcended, even briefly, the dysfunction of separatism and nationalism.

This article seeks to describe some of the ways in which The Coca-Cola Company contributes to the general wellbeing and security of citizens in the more than 200 countries in which it does business. Insofar as peace in a national sense is the remit of government and policymakers, the private sector can and should play only a limited role: In principle and practice, The Coca-Cola Company eschews

political engagement outside of its business interest in the beverage industry. To that end, we will consider the role of the company in the underlying elements of national stability; of economic and social contribution; of employment and individual health; and of the Golden Triangle of government, civil society, and the private sector in harness.

2. CSR initiatives

2.1. Providing jobs

It is important first to understand the business model of the Coca-Cola organization, which is not just international but also truly *multi-local*. The Coca-Cola Company, headquartered in Atlanta, GA, is the marketing engine that produces and sells beverage concentrate to its bottling partners. The bottling partners, in turn, are responsible for production and distribution of finished product, having operations in every country in the world, bar two. Together, the company and its bottling partners make up the Coca-Cola system. The system directly employs more than 750,000 local people worldwide and generates more than half of its revenue internationally. Behind each one of those directly employed associates are another 10 jobs throughout the value chain, creating widespread economic opportunity. Herein lies the first, and perhaps most important, contribution to national stability: Few would argue that the provision of a good job, with fair wages, working conditions, and respect for workers’ rights guaranteed and mandated by universal standards globally, is generally recognized as the essential building block for a growth economy.

2.2. Investing in the youth

Investment in job creation demands a long-term horizon, especially in developing markets. In 2016, The Coca-Cola Company will celebrate 130 years since its foundation, and evidence of its far-reaching vision can be seen in historic investment internationally; for example, in Africa, bottling operations began in Egypt in 1942 and even earlier in South Africa in 1928. The Coca-Cola system continues to invest to this day, with a further \$17 billion committed to Africa between 2010 and 2020. On this continent and in regions like the Middle East and North Africa, including Pakistan, observers note the correlation between large youth populations suffering from high levels of unemployment and social and political disturbance. The creation of opportunity for youth is critical in not only mitigating the disaffection of the present but also in

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