

COMMUNITY AND RESPECT FOR LIFE (C): THE ROLE OF NESTLÉ COLOMBIA IN SOCIETY¹

Did this make a difference?

That kind of initiative took time—results weren’t always immediate. In some areas, it was harder to see progress than in others. For instance, the conciliation efforts started to show results early on. They tracked the number of trained conciliators, how many cases they handled... These were cases that, if not resolved this way, could have escalated into violent situations. It was something more tangible. Exhibit 1 includes some of these successes. Antonio recalled:

“Violence is a complex phenomenon, and there are no quick fixes to eliminate it overnight. Statistics, of course, are important, but let’s not forget that what the indicators reflect are the outcomes of actions. We must focus on ensuring that the right decisions are made to implement actions that will lead to the desired results. “Community and Respect for Life” contributes to shifting the context in order to achieve those outcomes. Without a doubt, “Community and Respect for Life” is an initiative heading in the right direction, and it has been recognized as such by a wide range of stakeholders who see it as a model for addressing similar situations.”

They were aware that any results in terms of reducing crime rates would be a consequence of the progress made in implementing the strategy. Antonio said:

“Community and Respect for Life was clearly successful. There are three key elements to measure the success of the initiative.

- *Community and Respect for Life succeeded in influencing the Public Security Policies developed by the Colombian government.*
- *Not only did it avoid a situation of crisis like the one experienced in the past—following*

¹ This is a Case of the Research Division of San Telmo Business School, Spain. It has been written by Professor Rocío Reina Paniagua Business School and is intended as a basis for class discussion only and not to illustrate any judgment on the effective or ineffective management of a specific situation.

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the murders of workers and union leaders— but Nestlé Colombia’s stance in defense of Human Rights and its commitment to the development of Peaceful Communities was widely recognized.

- *Internally, the initiative helped foster a sense of pride among Nestlé Colombia’s staff.*

That’s why it was important to assess what the initiative had achieved across three key areas:

1. **PRIORITIZATION IN REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY:** The work carried out to date in the three municipalities made it possible to promote the prioritization of these areas by the National Government for the implementation of public policies on coexistence and security, such as Equity-Based Conciliation, which introduced alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. Added to the inclusion of the initiative in each municipality’s Coexistence and Security Plans, this ensured the long-term sustainability of the strategy.
2. **PARTNER NETWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INITIATIVE:** The Community and Respect for Life strategy coordinated and channeled efforts from various institutions with the shared goal of promoting peace and social cohesion in the region. Institutional capacities were combined to provide the region with ongoing support and expertise to foster respect for human rights and strengthen social bonds in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Partners involved in carrying out this initiative included:

- CISALVA Institute – University of Valle
- Government of Valle del Cauca
- Mayor’s Office of Bugalagrande
- Mayor’s Office of Andalucía
- Mayor’s Office of Tuluá
- Ministry of the Interior
- NGO La Red
- UCEVA – Central University of Valle del Cauca
- Ministry of Justice
- OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Tuluá Chamber of Commerce

These synergies had been fundamental in combining knowledge and mechanisms that allowed the community to be offered a comprehensive strategy for the protection of human rights and community security in the areas of influence.

3. **SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT:** This was a strategy aimed at long-term sustainability. One of its most recent achievements had been empowering communities to address the social problems arising in their territories by providing them with knowledge, tools, and leadership training to manage conflict

situations autonomously. This strategy also enabled them to understand the mechanisms and institutions they could turn to for specialized guidance when needed. In this way, Nestlé continued to advance the implementation of the Community and Respect for Life Initiative to keep promoting peaceful territories where conciliation, youth leadership, and the consolidation of information played a fundamental role. To further establish a legitimate framework for the strategy's work, they added the participation of the Office of the Ombudsman to continue strengthening these initiatives, which would remain focused on the same priorities that the company had defined for the program.

But, according to Antonio, the project had also achieved something else:

"Very important: Changing the mindset and attitude of Nestlé Colombia in the face of the challenges of a society tragically plagued by violence and ensuring that society recognizes the company's role in building a better future. Because before Community and Respect for Life, the criticism was clear: Nestlé is not doing enough to protect its workers, not doing enough on human rights, not supporting the community as it should. Many internal reservations had to be overcome, but with Community and Respect for Life, Nestlé implemented a full package of actions, built partnerships, launched joint initiatives, and, in some way, today, Nestlé has taken a step forward in leading human rights. It would be difficult for a situation to arise again in which Nestlé would be subject to the kind of criticism it faced in the past."

Sustained and profitable growth for a company like Nestlé can only be envisioned through the increasing prosperity of the society around it. This is the essence of the shared value creation model: working to generate value for both society and the company as two inseparable elements. Clearly, the prosperity of a society begins with ensuring peace, security, and the well-being of the community. That is why an initiative like Community and Respect for Life is so important to Nestlé in Colombia.

Investing in Community and Respect for Life is, without a doubt, a sound investment: it is a commitment to a more prosperous society, a demonstration of corporate leadership in addressing the fundamental values and principles on which our society is built, an opportunity to strengthen the trust our consumers place in us every day, and also a way to reinforce the pride our employees feel in being part of a company that works every day for people's well-being.

Community and Respect for Life, unfortunately, cannot guarantee that there won't be another killing tomorrow, but it must leave no doubt about the commitment and effort we dedicate each day to building a better society."

According to Antonio, after Community and Respect for Life, Nestlé was in an entirely different position. It had become a recognized actor among all key stakeholders—even the union leaders themselves—for doing everything possible to improve the reality in which Colombia found itself and for genuinely caring about the people in the community. And he reflected: