

P7 - Closing session

The 5th edition of the World Forum Lille ended with a moving interview of **Bibi RUSSELL**. Former international top model in the 70's, she has not lost beauty and charisma. She was glowing when she appeared on the stage, a black bandana rapped on her head, colorful glasses on her eyes, piercing, and earrings.

Bibi Russell, artist and social entrepreneur

Born and raised in Bangladesh, Bibi Russell saw poverty but also beauty in her country. After moving to Europe and travelling around the world, she would never forget her childhood. She *"wanted to do something for these people"*. In 1994, she founded Bibi Productions, a textile company which aims to give support to local people in Bangladesh. With her "Fashion for Development" program, she aims to promote the local textile industry worldwide and she received numerous awards for her social involvement and the support of the UNESCO.

Social involvement through full commitment to her work

Recently having travelled to Columbia, she explained how she is working there with the local communities. Her first preoccupation is the talented craft people she works with. Mostly coming from villages, they have a valuable know-how and tradition that she wants to keep alive. She values a lot the preservation of old ways of making clothes, bags... but insists on simplifying the traditional patterns to be able to have more products created, saving workers time but quality remains.

With her company Bibi Productions, everything is produced in Bangladesh by lower-middle class people with basic education and willing to work. She makes sure that they are paid in time and that they produce quality products, with no chemicals. Her goal for the value chain would be to create a direct relation with the supplier, but in the meantime she wants the "middle man" (linking small villages with big cities where clothes are sold) to be chosen from the village, not from the city.

A vision

Bibi Russell worked hard to get to realize her dream. She is famous, not rich. Her heart and her money are being put in her work. What she achieves is her only satisfaction.

"I don't believe in charity." She believes in supporting businesses and in giving a chance to poor people to come out of poverty with dignity. That is the only way to eradicate poverty. That is why she wishes to have a the textile industry relocated: she strongly believes in producing locally, by and for local people.

She puts the "human" at the center of everything. To fully be committed socially, human resources employees must have a lot of feelings and knowing about the local culture and the traditions in order to preserve them.

On these last words, Bibi Russel stepped down the stage and let the energetic Kenyan rap music group, TS1, perform their engaged songs to close the World Forum Lille.

Flash summary – realized by students from the EDHEC Business School