

**The New York Times** <https://nyti.ms/1HfJ9Ne>

SundayReview | OP-ED COLUMNIST

## Two Women, Opposite Fortunes

Nicholas Kristof MARCH 21, 2015

LUANDA, Angola — THIS is the tale of two women, each an emblem, in her own way, of one of the world's most corrupt and dysfunctional nations.

One of the women is Isabel dos Santos, Africa's richest woman. The daughter of Angola's president, she is worth \$3 billion and is Africa's only female billionaire as well as its youngest billionaire, according to *Forbes*. The magazine found that all her major Angolan investments were in companies seeking to do business there or were achieved by a stroke of her father's pen.

She has extravagant tastes. For her 10th wedding anniversary, she flew in guests from all over the world for days of lavish celebration. Dos Santos declined to comment, but she is widely seen as a symbol of Angola's status as one of the most corrupt countries in the world — “graft on a scale never before seen in Africa,” the Angolan journalist Rafael Marques de Morais told me.

The other woman, more typical, is Delfina Fernandes, and I met her at the end of a bone-rattling journey over impossibly rutted dirt roads in a village called Kibanga in the northern part of the country. Blind in one eye, she lives in a grass-roof hut without electricity or running water, and without access to health care.

Fernandes unrolled a homemade mat of straw on the ground and sat beside me there, telling me that she had lost 10 children (her neighbor, Ana Luciano, who had lost only four children and has a fifth now sick with malaria, said that sounded right). Perhaps the most excruciating blow a parent can suffer is to lose a child, and that has happened 10 times to Fernandes.

It's impossible to be sure how her children died because, like half the country's population, the family is beyond the orbit of the health care system. Therefore, her children never received birth certificates or death certificates. Yet a good guess is that they succumbed to malaria and malnutrition.

In all, Fernandes, 50, says she had 15 children, of whom five survive. She had never heard of family planning, like other women I spoke to along the road, and, in any case, none is available in rural areas here.

For people like Fernandes, life isn't that different from a few hundred years ago. There is no school in this area, so she and everyone else nearby is illiterate. Several villagers I talked to had never heard of the