

Over 1 billion viewers witness Miss Angola crowned Miss Universe 2011

 By [Issa Sikiti da Silva: @sikitimedia](#)

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It has been reported that more than one billion TV viewers from across 190 countries witnessed Miss Angola, Leila Lopes, being crowned Miss Universe 2011 on Tuesday 12 September 2011, in Brazil - a victory that got Facebook users brimming with joy and pride, as the continent rejoices amid the Kenya fuel tank fire and Zanzibar ferry disaster that killed over 100 and 200 people, respectively.

Lopes (25), born in Benguela Province in central Angola and a business management student, replaces last year's top laureate Ximena Navarrete of Mexico, according to media reports.

The win in Brazil's largest city Sao Paulo has some Facebook users singing praises such as 'wow' and 'I am proud of her', among others, a testimony of hope and pride filled in many African hearts despite multiple social and political ills plaguing the continent.

Miss Universe pledges to her country

Shortly after her victory, Lopes pledged to help her country to further escape its history of war and impoverishment and combat HIV.

"I've worked with various social causes. I work with poor kids and in the fight against HIV. I work to protect the elderly and I have to do everything that my country needs," she was quoted by Angolan state news agency Angop as saying.

"I think now as Miss Universe I will be able to do much more."

Angola is Africa's second-biggest oil producer and is one of the continent's fastest growing economies, but more than 80% of its people live below the poverty line, mostly blamed on the ruling MPLA's massive corruption. Angola has been at war since 1975's independence from Portugal - an armed conflict that ended in 2002.

The Donald Trump-owned beauty contest, now in its 60th edition, saw runner-ups of Ukraine and Brazil, Olesya Stefanko and Priscila Machado, respectively, flank African hopeful Lopes at the end of the proceedings.

Lopes was the only African candidate out of 16 who made it to the second phase. The other 15 hailed from Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, US, Philippines, France, Holland, Kosovo, Panama, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Ukraine and Venezuela, Angop reported.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA: @SIKITIMEDIA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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