

**The Dynamics of Community and NGO Partnership:  
Primary Health Care Experiences in Rural Mali**

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**ABSTRACT**

Utilizing ethnographic research methods, this case study examines the experiences of an NGO-sponsored health care program in rural Mali. The findings indicate that while, in principle, the organization operates from an alternative development base, it has been unable to decentralize the decision-making process and facilitate community dialogue and participation. Numerous problems resulted, including superficial forms of local participation, lack of community ownership, non-remuneration of health workers and midwives, inadequate training, and ultimately, limited program gains. The analyses highlight the complexity and dynamic nature of health program implementation in a developing context, and suggest several factors important to project success. These include drawing on diverse local perspectives, promoting broad-based participation, and providing culturally appropriate ways to include all community members, particularly women.