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“French Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Associational Life: Women’s Participation in Community Life and Local Government in Mali and Burkina Faso”

Why do women in Burkina Faso participate more in local government than women in Mali? Drawing on ten months of immersive field research in village research sites along these countries’ shared border, I analyze women’s active participation in associations. Associations are a prominent organizational form in both countries and can be a site for the development of agency that may be directed toward participation in local government. Data from this project illuminates how Malian and Burkinabe women deploy their agency in different ways in contexts defined by differing structural conditions. However, in both countries I find evidence that women play active roles in sustaining their families and communities in difficult economic circumstances.