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DISSERTATION TITLE: *Health Information Systems Integration as Institutionalisation: The Case of Zanzibar*

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offer opportunities to properly use the available resources in order to improve livelihood of the populations. In the healthcare sector, there are ongoing efforts that aim to not only utilize the ICT but also to standardize and integrate the different information systems (IS) that support different healthcare interventions, most of them operating under financial and technical support from external donors –both bilateral and multilateral.

Thus, this thesis addresses the question of how to understand and promote HIS integration given the highly entrenched fragmentation of healthcare service provision, a common scenario for developing countries. The thesis builds on empirical data from Zanzibar, Tanzania, where efforts to integrate the existing programme-based HIS are underway.

The thesis outlines challenges associated with HIS integration in this setting by identifying the institutional characteristics that shape the HIS integration process. It further, discusses and builds understanding of how power comes to bear on the HIS stakeholders and how this, in terms, influences development and institutionalization of the HIS.

To the academic community, the thesis made contributions on the use of notions of institutionalisation and power to explicitly and further unpack the dynamics of HIS integration, and to underscore the political nature of HIS integration.

To the IS practitioners, the thesis outlines design and implementation strategies used to mitigate the identified challenges. First, the importance of developing flexible standards that guide design of the HIS tools and procedures governing the HIS process. Second, the thesis acknowledges the importance of building political alliances and creating strategic partnerships within the organisational bureaucracy in order to build trust and gaining influence in decision making regarding implementation, and third, the thesis outlined a strategy for human capacity development to foster long term goals of institutionalisation of HIS, in a setting where both IT and data experts are difficult to build and retain, and where support is usually through short term projects.