



CHALLENGING PARADIGMS IN HEALTH INFORMATICS



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Summary

In this paper, we discuss e-health in the context of developing countries. We acknowledge that we ourselves have made many of the mistakes that we highlight, and our opinion is based on our learning from these experiences. We make two broad points relating to the development and implementation of Health Information Systems (HIS):

- We argue that we should focus on developing HIS that empower healthcare providers directly, so that our client organisations benefit from them. We prefer this over centralised data collection systems that solely seek information from providers in the field. By doing so, we can ensure that centralised data collection happens automatically and at better quality.
- Software is a small but integral part of the total information ecosystem. We believe that software partners will be relevant and yield results only when they engage with healthcare organisations and providers in the field where the service is delivered, instead of participating in the process as utility vendors.



Observations

In this paper, we will not delve into too much detail about the general challenges of developing and implementing HIS. We believe that much has been written about this. Instead, we will only describe a few less commonly cited systemic patterns that we have observed when it comes to the development and implementation of HIS for Governments and NGOs in particular.

- We have experienced that technology partners are brought to the table at later stages of e-health projects, as compared to other professionals like statisticians or management consultants. Moreover, the involvement of these technology partners typically ends much sooner in the project lifecycle. Cost is usually cited as the reason because IT vendors are not inexpensive, but the prevailing sentiment also appears to be that minimal vendor involvement is appropriate.

This has a detrimental effect on these projects, because in most cases, user needs only start manifesting when users receive

.



Agile encourages participants to embrace change and not view it as failure to predict the future accurately. Agile teams embrace change instead of focusing on surfacing the root causes of the changes needed. In a dynamic world, pre-analysing the outcome is extremely hard. Agile values being effective over being efficient. One can be efficient only when one possesses great knowledge of the problem as well as the solution, which happens but rarely in real-world situations.

