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Further investigations of the donor-flight response

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## Further investigations of the donor-flight response.

### Introduction

In Sweeney et al. (2014), we presented quantitative evidence that SWAp implementation has been associated with a 29.4% reduction in DAH receipts amongst a poorest subgroup of implementing countries. This evidence was derived using rigorous econometric methods and best available data. In this paper, we discuss the contribution such methods can make in assessing impacts of health SWAps and further consider issues of heterogeneity and measurement error. Additional regression results are presented that demonstrate the key findings in Sweeney et al. (2014), are robust to changes in model assumptions, including those suggested by Paul et al. Finally, we discuss interpretation of our findings, test an alternative explanation of the cause of donor-flight and propose future research to strengthen the evidence base on impacts of the health SWAp.

### The value of panel regression techniques

McNee (2012) warns of a range of measurement issues that “*reduce the power*” of many findings presented in previous SWAp reviews and evaluation papers. This is a literature dominated by case-study evaluations. Case studies make an important contribution in certain circumstances, such as assessment of perceived government engagement with and stewardship of individual SWAps. However, they have significant limitations when we try to quantify the effects of the SWAp approach, including its impact on DAH flows or health outcomes. At a minimum, quantification of SWAp effects requires a comparable, contemporaneous control group to limit confounding. And the potential confounding effects are noteworthy. The period of SWAp take-up has coincided with unprecedented increases in DAH as well as exposure to the Aid Effectiveness Agenda promoting harmonisation and coordination of all countries’ aid programmes regardless of SWAp status (OECD, 2010; Ravishankar et al., 2009). Randomised control trials (RCTs) are not possible. In the absence of RCTs, the econometric methods utilised in Sweeney et al. (2014) represent the best available means of

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