

Inclusiveness and Participation: Case Demonstration of Phuket Sandbox during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2021

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Abstract

The Phuket Sandbox is recognized as the first comprehensive roadmap for Thailand to reopen the border for international travellers and tourists. Social inclusion is the foundation during the sandbox's planning and implementation. Active participation from the public, private, and voluntary sectors together with infrastructure readiness and public confidence contribute to the launch. The Phuket Sandbox symbolizes the significant shift from the zero-infection paradigm which had dominated Thailand's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.

The Phuket Sandbox was launched during the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thailand imposed the lockdown and border closure in late March 2020 when dealing with the first wave of the pandemic. Also, the country re-imposed another strict lockdown to combat the second wave in December 2020. The sandbox concept was the initiative suggested by private sector at the provincial level. The inability to sustain the lockdown and border closure was the reason as the travel and tourism industry had significantly contributed to the local (and the country's) economy. Finally, the implications from the Phuket Sandbox are also discussed.

Keywords: Phuket Sandbox, COVID-19 Pandemic, Partnership and Participation, and Social Inclusion