

Strategy And Development of Border Quarantine During COVID-19 Pandemic, Taiwan, July 2020 to June 2022

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Abstract

In response to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Taiwan has adopted five major strategies to implement border quarantine and prevention measures, including overseas epidemic prevention, border quarantine, entry quarantine connecting with communities, inter-ministerial COVID-19 prevention programs, and autonomous epidemic prevention of key infrastructure in airports and seaports. Confronting the rapidly changing COVID-19 pandemic, the government has adopted passenger entry restrictions to decrease movement of people and transmission of disease, implemented measures to effectively prevent the introduction of SARS-CoV-2 variants into the community, such as pre-flight PCR test, saliva PCR test upon arrival, and follow-up of home quarantine management. According to the characteristics of the industries (aircraft, merchant ships, offshore wind power vessels, etc.) and practical operational needs, the competent authorities assessed COVID-19 risks and the prevailing policies, formulated epidemic prevention programs, and amended the competent laws and regulations to complete the penalty mechanisms. In addition, regular screening of front-line personnel in ports was conducted, the COVID-19 vaccination rate was increased, and training was provided on proper donning and doffing of protective equipment and implementation of operational control measures.

"Strict risk control at border" is one of focused strategies in Taiwan. Overall, passengers were highly cooperative, acquiring PCR test reports and pre-arranged quarantine sites before taking flight to Taiwan, and the violation rate was less than 1.5/1,000; the target group for screening upon arrival has been expanded from "symptomatic" passengers to all passengers, and the positive cases (rate) of PCR test has increased from 870 (0.19%) in 26th-53rd weeks of 2021 to 9,078 (2.50%) in 1st -25th weeks of 2022, with a high rate of 5.98% in a single week, which immediately

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reflected the changes in the global epidemic. As of the end of June 2022, more than 1.2 million home quarantine notices had been issued, and the quarantine information was linked to the community tracking. The Ministry's programs have been adjusted several times on a rolling basis. In addition, the air and seaport stations established proactive surveillance mechanism, continued infection control training and field verification operations, and vaccine booster coverage rate reached over 95%. The COVID-19 experience will provide the government with a reference for immediate planning and activation of border quarantine strategies in the face of future pandemics of emerging infectious disease.

Keywords: COVID-19, border quarantine, strict risk control at border, inbound screening, port response