

# Solomon Islands



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### 1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

The Solomon Islands has not recorded any direct involvement of the tobacco industry (TI) in policy development or implementation. However, the TI appears to exert influence through lobbying efforts. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Prime Minister and the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) remains in force. The SICCI, which includes SITC-BAT with its CEO serving on SICCI's Executive, plays a leading role in promoting TI interests and exerts considerable influence. This MOU represents a setback for public health, particularly tobacco control.

### 2. Industry CSR Activities

There is little documented evidence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities by the TI. Credible sources confirm that SITC-BAT operates a CSR program that allocates resources and seed funding to communities that submit applications for assistance, but evidence in the public domain is limited.

A senior official in the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MFT) revealed that the government maintains an "open policy" toward TI-sponsored CSR. However, this policy remains vaguely defined, lacks transparency, and leaves significant gaps in accountability.

### 3. Benefits to the Industry

The TI continues to maintain access to key government ministries, particularly those aligned with its commercial interests. A senior official within the Revenue Customs Unit confirmed the existence of targeted tax incentive provisions under the manufacturing sector, designed for businesses certified as manufacturers. One of the main beneficiaries is the TI, which has received exemptions and reductions on duties for raw materials, components, machinery, and equipment. As a result, goods taxes and customs excise duties are imposed only on final manufactured products. This structure enables the TI to benefit from reduced financial burdens, keeping cigarette prices low. A pack of 20 cigarettes of the most popular brand costs 32.00 SBD (approximately USD 4.00).

### 4. Unnecessary Interaction

In August 2024, the outgoing General Manager of BAT and executives paid a courtesy visit to the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Mines, Energy, and Rural Electrification. The Acting Prime Minister praised BATS' contributions to the country's development and expressed support for BATS' social initiatives, recommending collaboration with relevant ministries. The Permanent Secretary and the Minister of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), along with key officials, subsequently severed ties with the TI after learning of the obligations under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.



## 5. Transparency

There is no established procedure for public disclosure of meetings, minutes, or resolutions involving the TI and government agencies. There are no regulations requiring the disclosure or registration of TI entities, affiliates, or lobbyists acting on their behalf. The SICCI serves as a significant lobby group, representing the interests of businesses within the TI, particularly SITC-BAT.

## 6. Conflict of Interest

The Political Party Integrity Bill of 2014 (Section 57) requires disclosure of campaign funds after elections, but it does not prohibit political contributions from the TI or related entities. It also does not mandate real-time or pre-election disclosure of such contributions.

There is no evidence that current high-ranking government officials or their relatives hold positions within the TI. Section 94 of the Constitution requires public officials to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, particularly those that may compromise the impartial execution of their duties.

## 7. Preventive Measures

The Tobacco Control Act lacks provisions to address TI interference. There is no code of conduct guiding public officials in their interactions with the TI. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) is reviewing the Act to incorporate Article 5.3 principles, recognizing the TI's use of economic influence, marketing, and lobbying to undermine public health efforts. The government has no policy prohibiting gifts, contributions, or assistance from the TI, whether monetary, policy-related, or in the form of study visits offered to officials, agencies, or their families.

In 2025, the MHMS and its Tobacco Control Unit launched advocacy and awareness campaigns focused on key aspects of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Appoint a national overseer or focal coordinator within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to manage and coordinate all tobacco control initiatives, with support from the NCD department and TCTAC.
2. Strengthen the Tobacco Act to explicitly incorporate the provisions of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.
3. Mobilize and lead a nationwide advocacy initiative and campaign to raise awareness about the harms of tobacco use and Article 5.3.
4. Allocate a significant and dedicated portion of the Health Promotion Fund to strengthen tobacco control efforts and ensure effective implementation of related policies and programs.
5. Establish regulations in accordance with Section 41 of the Tobacco Act 2010 to govern industry interactions, meetings, and CSR activities, while strengthening reporting requirements for the industry.