

New SHP business firm good for women

By ERIC TAPAKAU

BEING a woman today in PNG is very challenging, senior business executives of very high profile companies in Australia were told this week.

Former *Post Courier* journalist Ruth Waram opened their eyes to the situation when asked to speak on International Women's Day.

They are the child bearers, the doctors and nurses in the home when the members of the family are sick, they are gardeners ensuring there is food on the table when their family comes home and in a welcome change from the traditional roles, are becoming increasingly the bread winners of families.

In addition to this, and as PNG progresses, they are dealing with new challenges - being victims of HIV/AIDs, bearing the burden of having their children die because they can't access health facilities to deliver their babies; bear the scars of domestic violence.

While women celebrated the day at home on Monday a Papua New Guinean woman was sitting uneasily at a luncheon in Sydney on Monday, awaiting her turn to be called up to the podium to talk



Ruth Waram speaking during the luncheon in Sydney, Australia.

about what women go through in Papua New Guinea. Oil Search Limited's corporate affairs co-ordinator Ruth Waram was asked by Business 4 Millennium Development (B4MD) chief executive officer Mark Ingram to give an impromptu speech about what women in PNG go through.

B4MD's guest of honour for the event was Nobel Prize winner Professor Muhammed Yunus, affectionately known as the banker

of the poor. He is the founder and managing director of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh.

Without having prepared for the speech, Ms Waram, who shared the podium with Professor Yunus and Mr Ingram, spoke about the day to day issues that face women in PNG, especially in the rural areas such as Southern Highlands Province where Oil Search Limited operates its oil and gas fields. She shared her

own experience as the daughter of subsistence farmers, living near a mining township, who most times had to rely on their vegetable gardens and coffee trees to pay for her education, graduating with a university degree, how she got a good job and is now financially independent.

However, she said there are many like her, who hold high positions in both the private and public sectors, who are subjected to domestic violence and abuse at the hands of their partners, a situation she says she has experienced with her former partner.

Speaking in support of the establishment of Southern Highlands Produce Limited, Ms Waram said the concept is a good initiative as it will provide an opportunity for the grassroots women to earn direct income from their garden produce.

"It is a great concept because they will continue to grow the vegetables, the only difference is that this time, there will be a market available to them. "Not only will it benefit the women, but the youths and the whole family, as the earnings from their produce may supplement other finances for the family." Ms Waram said.