

Hides sign major deal

By ERIC TAPAKAU

HIDES Gas Development Corporation (HGDC) is making sure that traditional livelihoods like gardening are not forgotten when landowners see the monetary benefits of the PNG LNG project flow into the villages.

The company has signed a new joint venture agreement with an aim to empower local farmers to grow fruits and vegetables using technical assistance from the joint venture partner Business 4 Millennium Development (B4MD).

HGDC and B4MD signed a memorandum of agreement on Tuesday night in Port Moresby to form Southern Highlands Produce Limited, a company that will buy and sell fresh produce from the province.

B4MD is a partnership forum that connects Australian businesses with profitable opportunities that deliver poverty reduction outcomes in support of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the Asia Pacific region.

The set up provides a model for social business enterprise where a company majority owned by the



B4MD chief executive officer Mark Ingram signs the new joint venture agreement.

farmers is managed commercially to bring a profitable outcome for the farmers, thus leaving all the profit in their hands.

Under this arrangement, B4MD will provide necessary expertise, tools and support for SHP to assist with running the company.

This will also give an opportunity for Southern Highlanders, not only from the oil and gas project areas, to also grow fresh produce and sell to the company.

To complete the new deal, a delegation from the Southern Highlands Province will be travelling

to Sydney over the weekend to meet with up to 3000 participants in the private sector that are ready to support the new joint venture company.

“Southern Highlands Produce brings together a group of Australian international companies working in partnership with the communities of Southern Highlands Province to create a community based fresh produce company,” said B4MD chief executive officer Mark Ingram.

“The project is a social business enterprise. The participants will deploy their core business to the projects, for example, they will provide seedlings, packing and management to the project. The benefit of the profits will go directly to the farmers and it will be used for their livelihood.”

HGDC chairman Tuguywaini Libe Parindali welcomed the signing, saying it was an opportunity to empower farmers and women in the province.

He said it would be unwise to forget the traditional ways of living such as gardening when people saw the benefits from the LNG project and the new deal would also empower women and villagers.