

Local SHP firm 'sure' of success

By ERIC TAPAKAU

SOUTHERN Highlands Produce Limited is confident of pulling support from high profile companies to start its operations.

This was revealed in Sydney, Australia this week by partners in this joint venture between Hides Gas Development Company, the umbrella landowner company for the upstream landowners of the PNG LNG project and Business 4 Millennium Development.

Business for Millennium Development (B4MD) is a partnership forum that connects Australian business with profitable opportunities that deliver poverty reduction outcomes in support of the United

Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in the Asia Pacific region. Established in 2007, B4MD is supported by its founding members IBM, KPMG, Insurance Australia Group, Visy, Oil Search and World Vision Australia. B4MD is further supported by the Australian Federal Government through AusAID.

Oil Search Limited managing director Peter Botten, who is the supporter of the joint venture company, said the critics would be proved wrong once Southern Highlands Produce Ltd starts operating in the business of purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers throughout Southern Highlands Province and selling them to camps that will be housing workers in the

multibillion kina PNG LNG project. He said the partners needed to put together a good business plan that would lead to the drafting of a formal proposal to secure funding for the new joint venture.

Mr Botten said there were many organisations that wanted to assist local communities in the developing countries but there was no avenue and the right persons that would work together with these companies.

He said for Southern Highlands Produce Limited, B4MD would help with the provision of such assistance to Southern Highlanders in the form of assisting with seedlings, packaging and finally transporting the produce to the readily available

markets. Hides Gas Development Company Limited representative Tuguyawini Libe Parindali said that the concept to start Southern Highlands Produce under a joint venture arrangement with B4MD was a step in the right direction to assist women and children out of the oil and gas development licence areas of Southern Highlands Province so that they too had an avenue to earn income.

Southern Highlands Produce is majority owned (70 per cent) by the farmers of Southern Highlands while 30 per cent is owned by Hides Gas Development Corporation.

The ownership structure is yet to be worked out to accommodate the new joint venture partners.