

### **The Manthaar Family Battles with Hepatitis:**

Until recently, the Manthaar Household in Sukhi Mir Jat was plagued by a mysterious illness that couldn't be properly diagnosed by the local health practitioners. Six members, out of the family of twelve, reported symptoms of fatigue, recurring fevers and loss of appetite which was taking a huge toll on the family physically, psychologically and financially. The excruciating pain brought on by Hepatitis rendered the men incapable of work every three days of the week, necessitating the use of costly pain killers to ward off the pain, not only hurting the family physically but financially as well.

Although they were seeking treatment from the doctor in the adjoining Hala town, misdiagnosis of their ailment and wrong medical prescriptions only worsened their plight.

Unbeknownst to them, they were Hepatitis positive. The high prevalence of Hepatitis was not just confined to the Maanthaar household alone; the virus had in a year's span claimed an estimated fifteen lives in Sukhio Mir Jat.

Earning an average income of Rs 5,000 per month to support a household of twelve, the health expenditures amounting to Rs 2,000 monthly on consultation and medication of their crippling illness was almost half of their meager incomes, leaving them at the mercy of local money lenders to finance their deficit, pushing them further into poverty.

Help came in the form of OSDI's Hepatitis Control and Prevention program in January 2011. The program being implemented in collaboration with Sindh Government involving extensive screening, vaccination and treatment of rural communities including Sukhio Mir Jat.

Six members of the Manthaar family including the father, mother and their three sons were discovered to be afflicted with Hepatitis C during the screening process. After the infection was discovered, they were immediately scheduled for treatment. The father and his three sons have since been fully cured from Hepatitis through the OSDI Hepatitis program while the mother is scheduled to undergo second line of treatment in the near future.

The successful hepatitis treatment has conferred the two fold blessing of savings in excess of Rs 2,500 per month previously spent in flawed healthcare, but also generation of a steady stream of Rs 15,000 monthly income by the reinvigorated men of the family who before coming under the OSDI Hepatitis Prevention and Control Program were struggling to earn even Rs 9,000. Once the mother is cured of the infection, she can also fully participate in agricultural activities further enhancing their livelihood. Out of the throes of their debilitating poverty, the family can now focus on improving their welfare as healthy citizens of the community.

