

Hussain Buksh's kitchen garden starts to bloom



Every evening all members of Hussain Buksh's household, including 2 sons, 4 daughters, and a wife, sit down to have dinner. The dinner consists of an assortment of vegetables grown from Hussain Buksh's own kitchen garden. For the retired army pensioner the threat of food insecurity loomed large in face of market supply shocks and rising inflation. *"My pension of Rs 5,000 was not enough to cover my food expenditures at all. I had to make a lot sacrifices and cut down on other expenses,"* he said. Households such as Hussain Buksh's who do not own farmland are always

vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Approximately 240 square yards space inside a poor family's house was designated to cultivate vegetables with the help of OSDI's field staff. OSDI provided seeds of four to five vegetables including tomatoes, onions, spinach and okra, as well as fertilizer for them. The beneficiaries including Hussain Buksh were also provided training and expert consultation on best vegetable cultivation practices by OSDI appointed agriculture scientist.

"In my first two tries I was really disappointed because no matter what I did, my vegetables would not grow. After OSDI's team inspected the soil, it was found to be saline and I was provided new soil," he explained. After OSDI's prescribed changes not only did Hussain Buksh's vegetables began to grow but within a few months, the vegetables were sustaining his household's dietary needs. *"Previously I had to spend between Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,000 of my pension on vegetables. Now all I have to do is pick them from there,"* he points to his kitchen garden.

Not only is he saving money but fresh produce from his kitchen garden is also providing a balanced diet to his family for more than six months now. Till date, he has grown potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, spinach and *shaljam* in his kitchen garden. *"After the spinach season I will plant okra,"* he adds. He plans to grow more in order to sell his vegetables in the market and generate income from his newly acquired skills. For the time being he is happy to share excess vegetables with his father, brother, and sometimes his neighbor as well.

