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PRESS RELEASE

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EU offers €150,000 to help victims of Muzaffarnagar communal violence weather the cold season

New Delhi, 20th December 2013 – Almost 10,000 people living in relief camps across Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh will receive emergency shelter materials such as tents, tarpaulins, ground sheets, foam mattresses and warm blankets, financed by funds from the European Commission, to protect themselves from the bitter cold weather, which has reportedly claimed several lives in the camps.

The funds will also be used in the construction of latrines and bathing spaces, with separate cubicles for women and adolescent girls, to address significant water and sanitation needs in the camps. In addition, hand pumps will be installed, where existing ones are not functioning, to ensure displaced families have access to safe water supply. Hygiene kits will also be distributed.

"The efforts by our Humanitarian Aid office towards people living in these relief camps is to ensure that their urgent needs in terms of shelter, blankets, water and sanitation facilities are met quickly", said Joao Cravinho, the European Union's Head of Delegation in India. "I hope that our gesture will help them keep warm during the coldest months of the year, while the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities will minimise health risks during this long displacement".

The project is being funded by the Small Scale Response mechanism of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO). It will be implemented by ECHO's partner Oxfam, which has already carried out several relief and disaster preparedness activities in India. Last year, ECHO had partnered with Oxfam to address the immediate needs of people displaced following inter-communal clashes in the north-eastern state of Assam.

Background

Clashes between the Hindu and Muslim communities in early September in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh claimed 61 lives, injured almost 100 and displaced over 70,000 people. The attacks, which disproportionately affected Muslim families, have been described as being the worst in over two decades that resulted in the deployment of several military and paramilitary units. Most of the displaced took shelter in madrassas and public schools before being directed to more than 50 relief camps that were set up in the following days. Since then many families have moved to neighbouring states of Haryana and Delhi while others have sought refuge with their relatives. However, according to the latest government figures, approximately 10,000 people continue to languish in relief camps.

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