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Shamshur

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Traditional Birth Attendants
At the Hope Field Hospital, Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh
Melissa Dalton-Bradford

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Shamshur and Nidar Begum, Rohingya TBAs (Traditional Birth Attendants)

Saturday, March 2

Hope Field Hospital

Rihan, HumaniTerra translator

Shamshur and Nidar have been in Cox's Bazaar (refugee camp) for 8 months, each.

Originate from Rakhine Province, Myanmar

They were trained in their homeland as TBAs

No Muslims are allowed treatment in a Buddhist hospital in Myanmar. Hence, the Rohingya have relied exclusively upon folk cures and traditional treatments for the medical cares for their own.

(Rohingya were forbidden citizenship, the right to own property, to work on the economy, to attend local schools, etc.)

These two women were sought out in Cox's Bazaar to give support for pregnant women and to encourage them to come here in the hospital

Surgical cases can only be handed in the hospital. These women are not equipped to handle any surgical cases.

The TBAs are available 24 hours a day, but find they're busiest in the middle of the night when critical cases arrive, and they contact the Hope Foundation ambulances who bring the women in critical condition to the Hope Hospital

Their contact person is Kanata, who, incidentally, is the head midwife for the Hope Field Hospital and is also the translator for all of the single women in interviews TSOS conducted.)

The TBA's make regular home visits without any medical equipment, but report high need cases to the Hope Field Hospital

TBAs palpate the mother and tried to manually reposition breech babies, for instance

The Rohingya have a general suspicion about hospitals and medical treatment

They are traumatized by the experiences they have had under the Burmese army:

They are afraid the hospitals will do what the Myanmar soldiers did, and steal their babies

Many of these women have been victims of sexual torture and when told need to be alone in a room with a man who will treat them medically, they are afraid they will be sexually tortured

The Rohingya women by and large will not tell others that they have been raped

But these TBAs can see and have seen physical evidence of rape and sexual torture in patients

Some rape victims are very young girls, even as young as 11 years old

These two women, these Rohingya midwives, were visibly angry at the army

These two were never raped

They also reported to receiving dignity and stature in the community for their work,

Shamshura has nine children of her own and her husband is in prison

Nidar Begum has two children and her husband was killed or lost in the war