

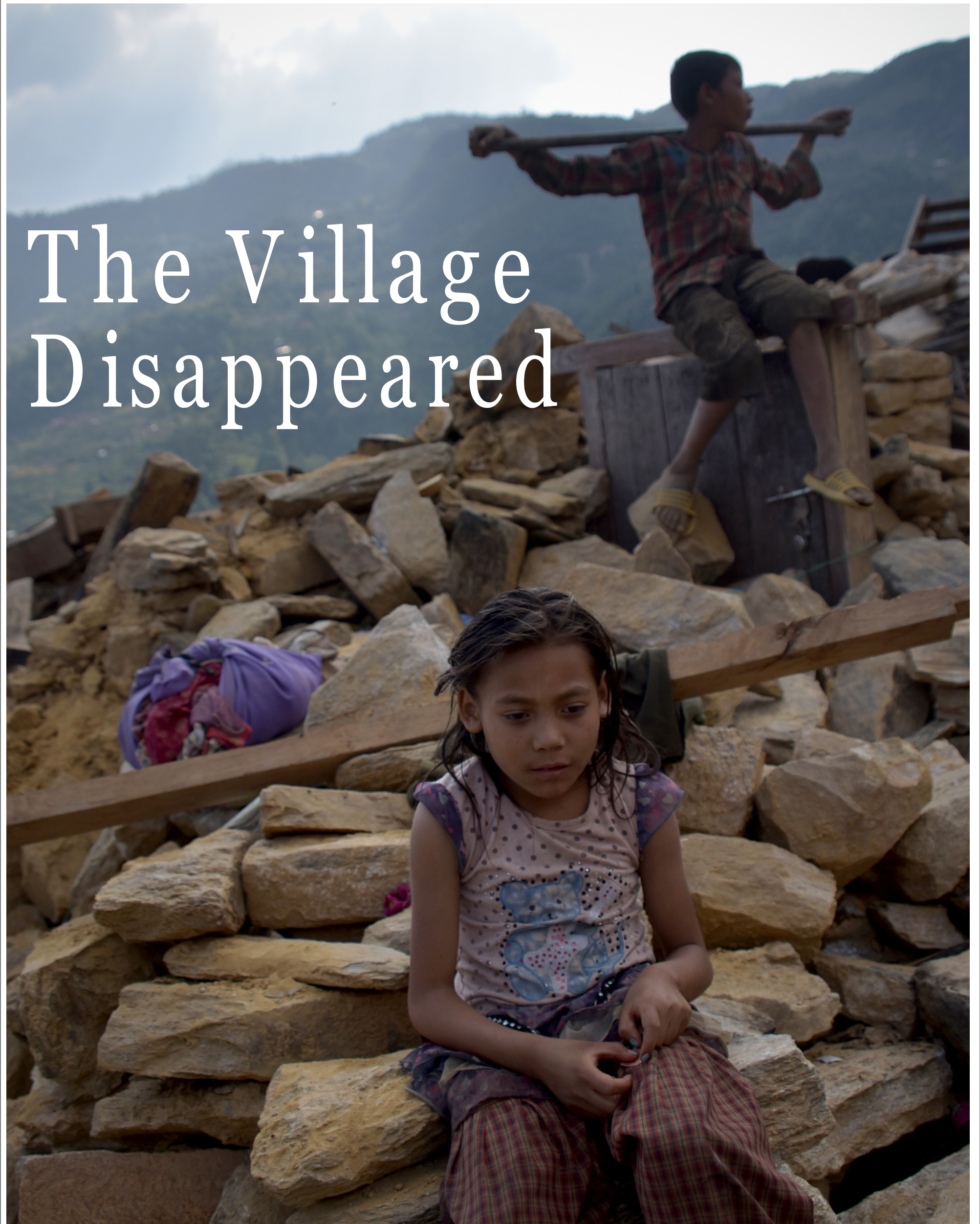
# The PHOTO JOURNAL

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PHOTO&TEXT  
BY YUKI IWANAMI

The whole village of Simle, once surrounded by rice paddies and situated on a slope, was swept downhill.

Sindhupalchowk District, NEPAL— Although the rural and mountainous regions of Nepal were hit especially hard by the earthquake, information from these areas has been limited even as time passes. Many of the mountain villages lack roads allowing the use of automobiles, and relief supplies are not reaching the survivors.

The Sindhupalchowk District east-northeast of Kathmandu is

said to have seen the worst devastation, and to reach the village of Simle, I had to leave my car to cross a bridge suspended over a river, then walk for forty minutes along a trail lined by terraced rice paddies. There, a group of about forty surprised villagers gathered to greet me. "Must have been tough to get here. You're the first one here since the earthquake" they told me. That also meant that absolutely no supplies had reached the place yet.

Every single one of the houses which once stood on the slopes had slid down and collapsed. The stink of a dead water buffalo trapped under the debris wafted through the air.

At the bottom of the village was a crude hut made from wood and corrugated metal. All the villagers had helped to build it after the quake, and now a hundred of them huddled together inside. I happened to visit the village thirteen days after the earthquake, and according to Hindu tradition, it was the day to commemorate the dead. A ceremony for the five villagers who lost their lives was taking place. The relatives could be seen mourning under the white vinyl roof.

The mountainous area deeper east into Dolakha District is where two indigenous people, the mainly Hindu Newar people and the Tamang people who practice Tibetan Buddhism, live side by side. The houses here are built from stones rather than bricks, but that did not make them less vulnerable to the tremor, leaving many of them in ruins. Despite living next to a paved road, Anil Lama, 23 says that no people nor supplies have come through this way and explains how the rain leaks through the sheet-metal roof of his makeshift shack.

Far from the paved road, I spotted a cluster of nine stone houses high above the hills. If they had still been standing, it would have looked like something out of Hayao Miyazaki's film, Castle In The Sky, but sadly, all of them had been reduced to rubble.

The thirty-five people from this settlement make a living growing potatoes and onions and milking water buffalo. Everyone was out in the field when the earthquake struck so there were no casualties, but like the other places, the only shelter they now have was what the thin metal above their heads can provide. "There's nowhere else for us to go. This is the only place we can keep on living", Nam Harka Gubhaju says.

But the people from these isolated villages have been spending their lives almost completely self-sufficient to start with, and instead of waiting for help, they were already carrying stones and dirt from the mountains and collecting pieces of wood to rebuild their homes. The women were in the fields tending the earth, just like before the earthquake. They had accepted reality, and were steadfastly carrying on.

Translation by Taro Konishi



Karuna Shrestha injured her arm and traveled 50km to a city hospital for treatment. Simle





Liksuna Lama collects firewood from his destroyed home. Dolakha



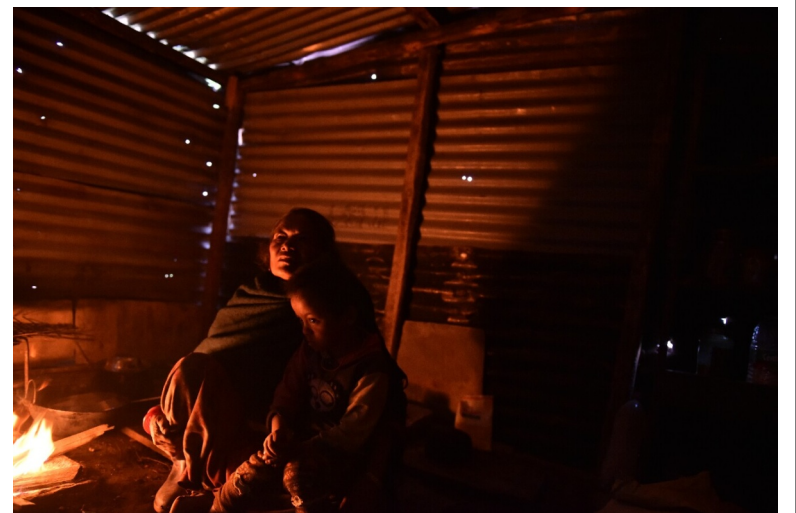
Jamuna Shrestha lives in a tent with her forty relatives. Sindhupalchowk District



An elderly woman in front of her damaged home. Dolakha District



Families of the deceased attend a Hindu ceremony. Simle



Dil Kumari Shrestha and her grandchild Gonga Zomna. Shuara



Villagers huddle inside a makeshift hut. Simle



Villagers carry material to rebuild their home. Dolakha District



Though having their houses destroyed, villagers tend their gardens. Shuara





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