

Memories of Dr. Harka Gurung

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The untimely demise of Dr. Harka Gurung is an irreparable loss to Nepal. The country has lost a leading planner, brilliant thinker and a renowned scholar. It is also a personal loss to me, as I had the opportunity to interact with him frequently for the last 21 years, personally as well as professionally. He was a source of inspiration and new ideas for all of us.

I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Harka Gurung for the first time in the East-West Center, Honolulu where I was a graduate student and he was a Visiting Fellow doing research in population and migration. We spent several months in the same Institute and on the same campus. I found him to be consistently hard working, intelligent, but a simple person. Dr. Gurung always used to work professionally and excelled in his work. He had an excellent knowledge on almost all issues of Nepal including geography, history, culture or socio-economic issues. From that perspective he was an institution as well as an encyclopedia by himself. However, he did not want to relate his work with his future gains or losses.

Dr. Gurung, when he was the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission initiated and implemented the idea of dividing the country into five development regions to help improve the livelihood of deprived regions and reduce inequality. The division is still relevant and has been used in almost all socio-economic analysis and the planning of the country. He was the leader of the committee formed to provide names to mountain peaks in the late 1970s. Dr. Gurung's contribution in the literature of social inclusion in Nepal is also noteworthy. Lately, we also pushed him to work on the issues of social inclusion of the country through Social Inclusion Research Fund. He agreed to help the Fund and later produced a paper on inclusion entitled "From Exclusion to Inclusion: Socio-Political Agenda for Nepal"(probably this is his last monograph), which could be an extremely useful document in developing the socio-political inclusion strategy for new Nepal.