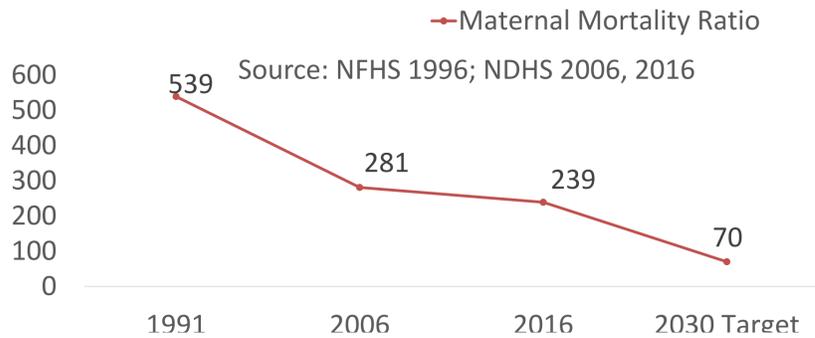


Maternal & Neonatal Health (MNH)

About 810 women die from pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications around the world every day and 6,500 newborn die everyday within the first 28 days of life (UNICEF 2020).

Trends in Maternal & Neonatal Mortality in Nepal

The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Nepal is estimated to be 239 deaths per 100,000 live births (NDHS, 2016).



Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) accounts for nearly half the total under 5 years mortality rates.



Source: NFHS 1991, 1996; NDHS 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016

There is an improvement in neonatal mortality in the NDHS 2016, however, these improvements could be challenged with the development of a new political system which will impact on the delivery of health services at all levels.

Federalisation in Nepal

Nepal's political system has significantly changed in the past three decades. In 2015, Nepal changed its new constitution moved from its unitary system to a Federal Republic and divided into 7 provinces (Fig.1)



Fig. Map of Nepal, after the federalisation

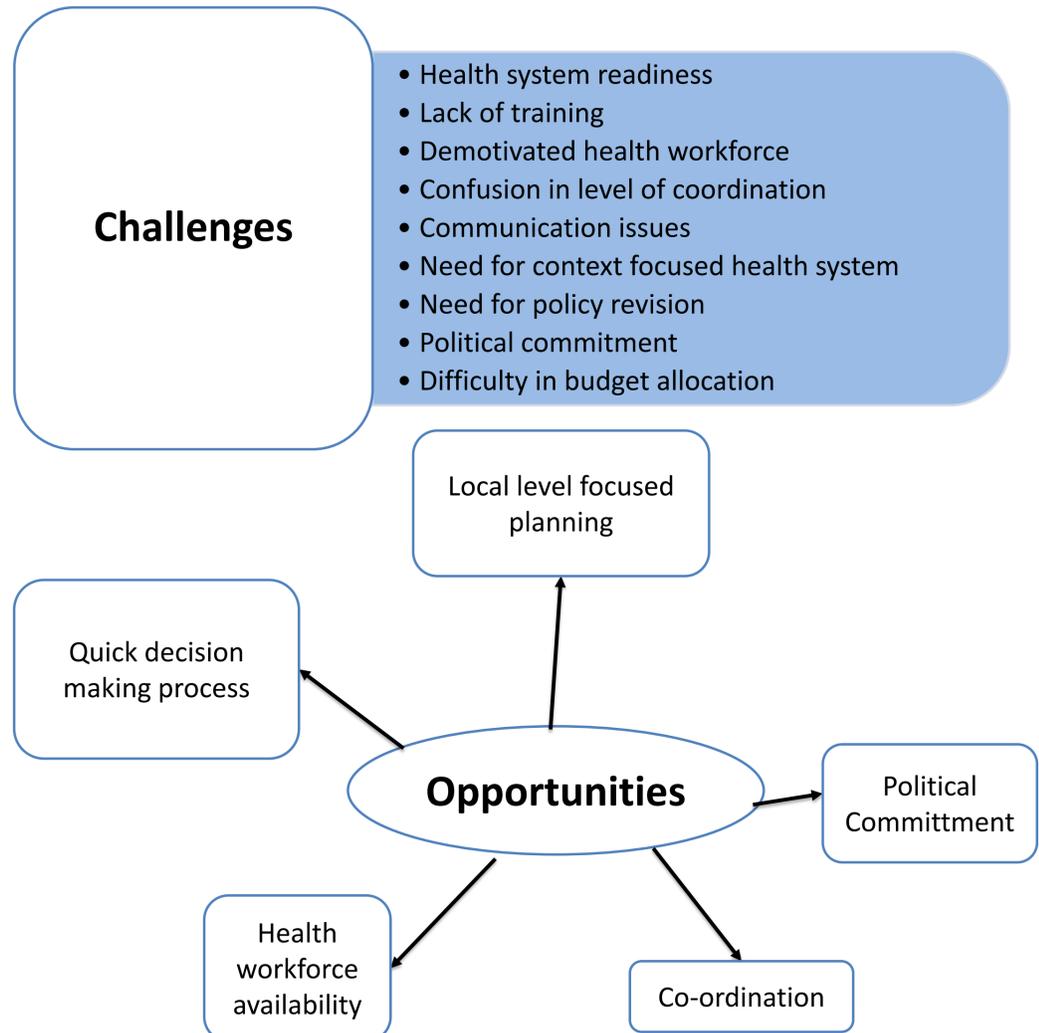
With the change in the country's political situation, it has opened up the opportunities for knowledge generation as well as various challenges in the Nepalese health system. Hence, this study explored the challenges and opportunities raised by federalisation in maintaining maternal and neonatal quality of care in Nepal.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with health service providers (n= 16) and health managers (n=17), working in the field of maternal and neonatal health for two or more years. Thematic analysis was done using NVIVO software.

Findings

The theme that emerged from the interviews on challenges and opportunities raised by the federalisation on maintaining maternal and neonatal quality of care in Nepal were as follows:



Demotivated health workforce, lack of support from higher level, confusion in co-ordination as well as communication issues were highlighted as the challenges raised due to the new localized health system.

Most of the health managers and health service providers perceived that there are some opportunities raised by federalisation such as quick decision-making process and local community focused planning, while some health service providers felt that there were not any opportunities at all, rather they faced delays in their salaries in addition to reduction in training opportunities.

The participants also felt that there is need for policy revision and context focused health system with proper communication and co-ordination mechanism.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Federalisation has brought many challenges as well as the opportunities in maintaining quality of maternal and neonatal health in Nepalese health system. This study found that there is need for policy revision and health facility readiness in the new health system structure while the federalisation has also made the work easier by having quick decision making as well as having health workforce availability at the health facility.