

# The Future of Social Media in India: From Text to Voice

Bill Thies

Microsoft Research India

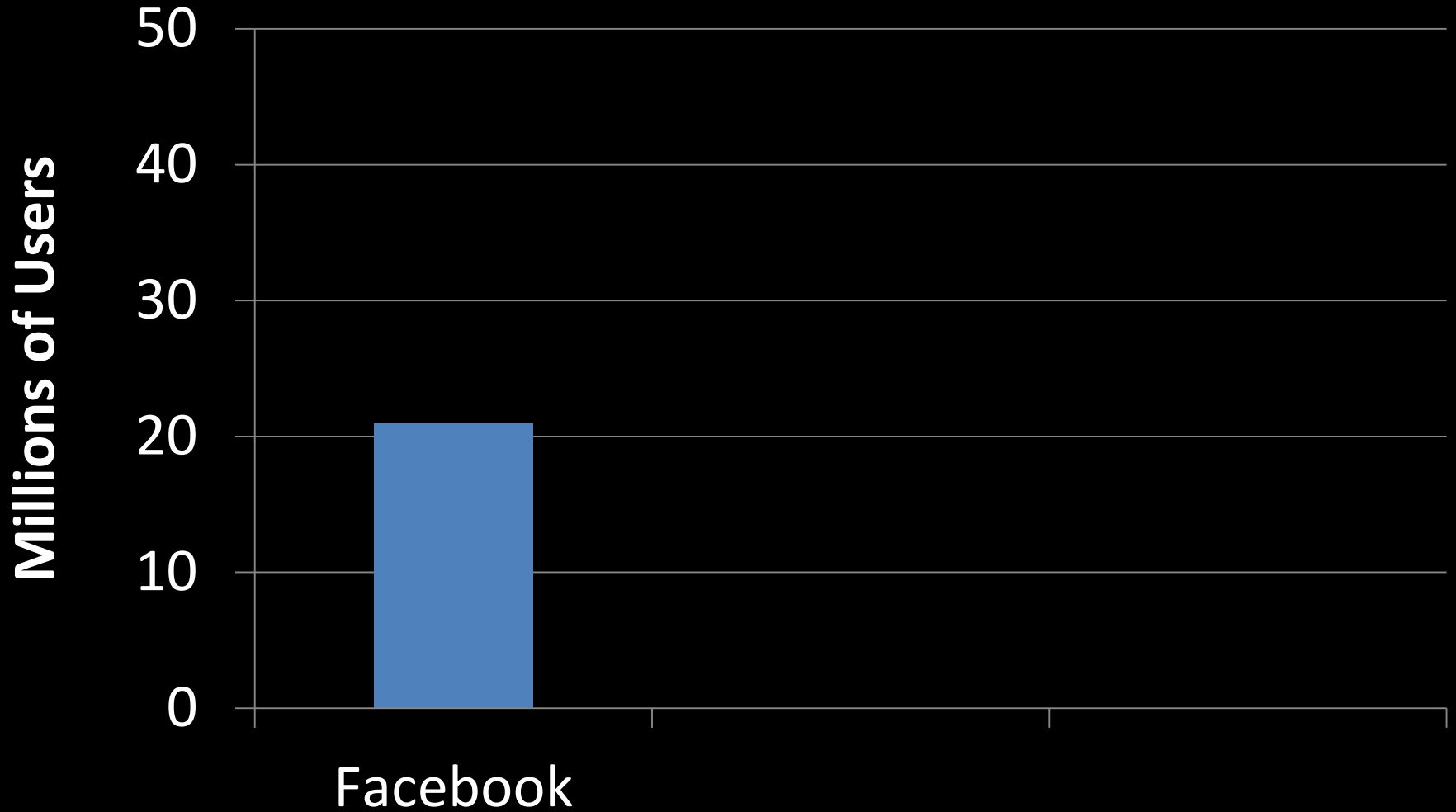
Joint work with Shubhranshu Choudhary, Arjun  
Venkatraman, Anoop Saha, Thomas Smyth

November 18, 2011

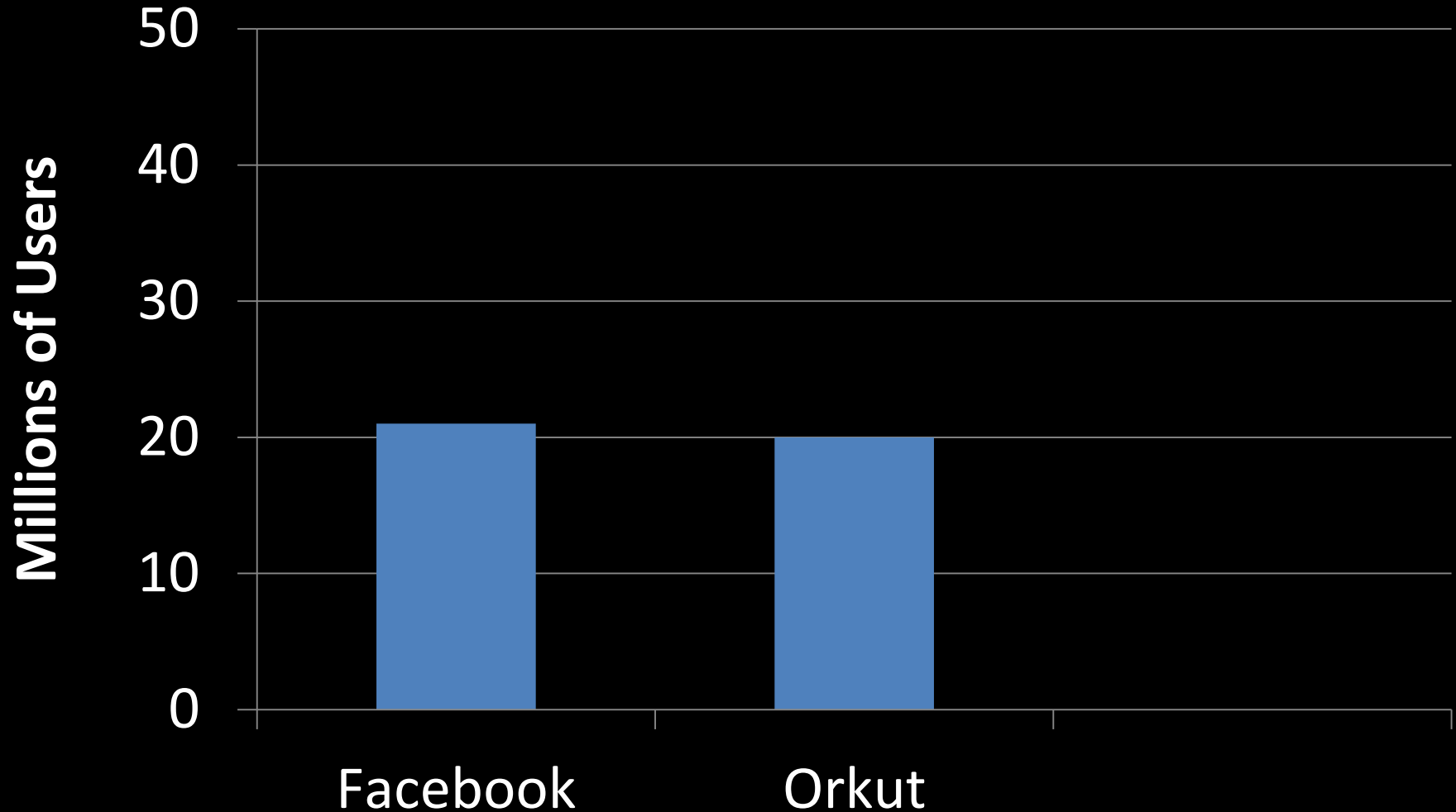
# What is the Largest Social Media Service In India?



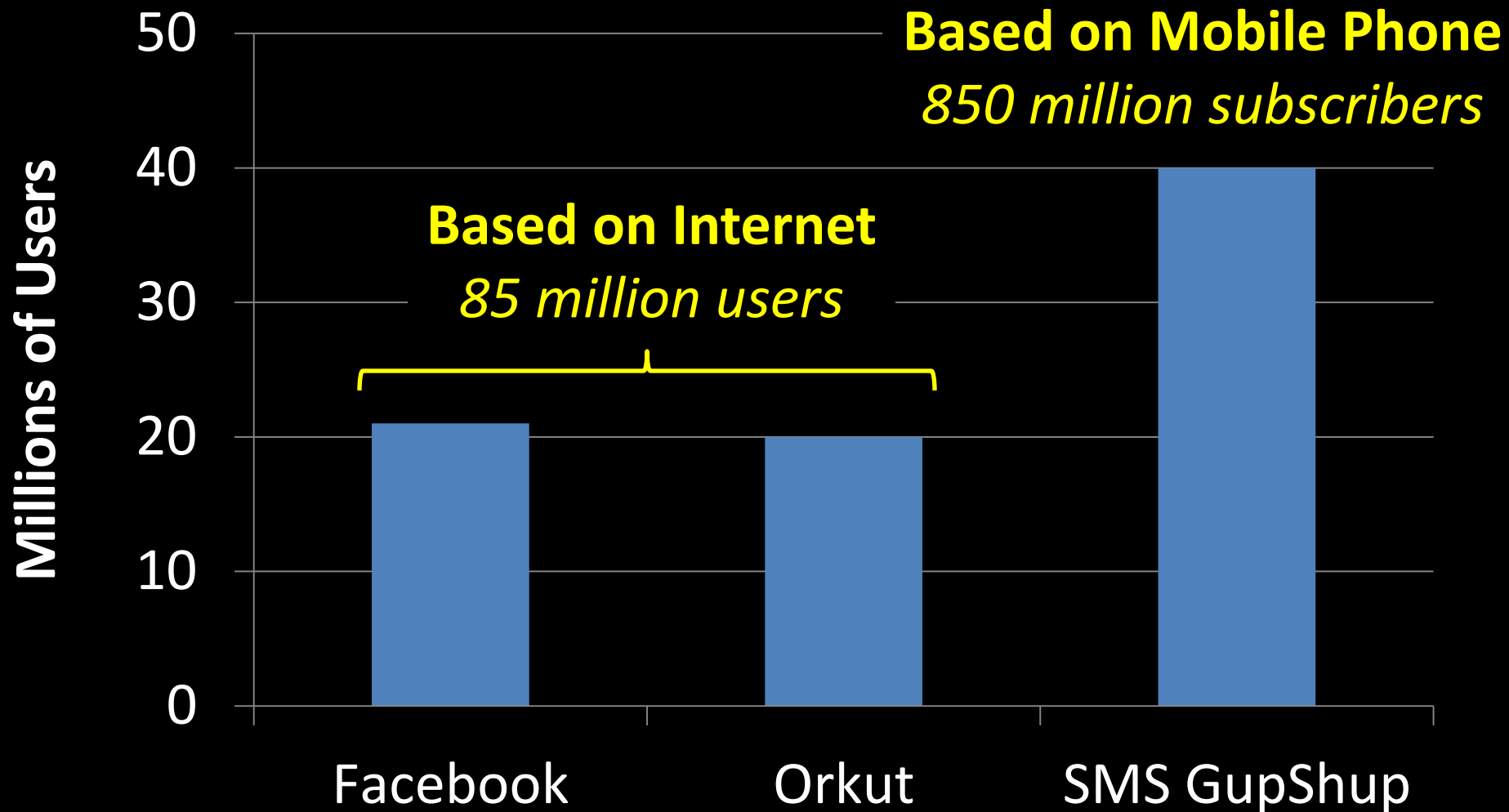
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# Voice Remains Primary Interface for Mobile Subscribers in India

- Most subscribers lack smart phones

Smart Phone: < 5%



Feature Phone: ~45%  
(e.g., music player)



Basic Phone: ~50%



*Mobile Internet: < 3% of subscribers*

- Text interfaces hindered by:
  - Low literacy
  - Language diversity

# Interactive Voice Response in India

- In 2010: over 25% of Rs. 15,000 Crore revenue from value-added services due to IVR
  - Expected to grow to Rs. 50,000 Crore by 2020
- Examples:
  - Ringtones, music, jokes, astrology
  - Booking movie tickets, travel, mobile commerce
  - TATA's *Behtar Zindagi* program: information for farmers with over 10,000 voice prompts
  - Screening for *Kaun Banega Crorepati*

What will become the Web 2.0 for  
India's 850 million mobile subscribers?




**AIRCEL**



Your Facebook,  
in your **voice.**



Now express emotions that words can't with **Facebook Voice Updates on Aircel.**

Aircel & Facebook partner to introduce Voice Status Updates. Now express your emotions and much more on Facebook in your own distinctive voice. Just **dial 51555\*** from your Aircel mobile to record and update your status, without even having access to the internet. The recorded voice clip will appear on your Facebook wall as your status update. So go ahead, voice your mind!

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1 February 2011 Last updated at 04:50 ET



## Egypt protesters use voice tweets

**Google and Twitter have launched a service which circumvents the ban on net services in Egypt.**

The so-called speak-to-tweet system allows people caught up in the unrest to post messages without any need to use an internet connection.

The service, which is already live, allows people to dial an international telephone number and leave a voicemail message.

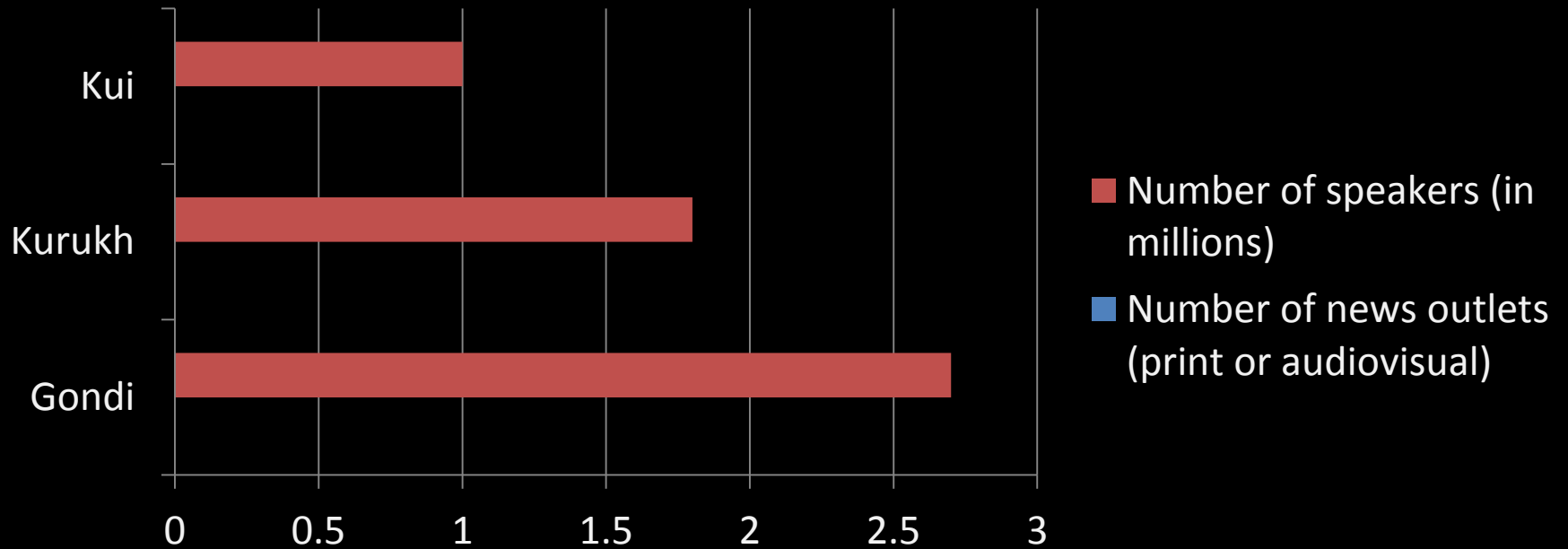
The message is then sent out as a tweet with the hashtag #egypt.



The service could give protesters a new way of communicating with the outside world

**Egypt's  
Revolution**

# Journalism in Tribal India





# CGNet Swara: A Voice Portal for Citizen Journalism

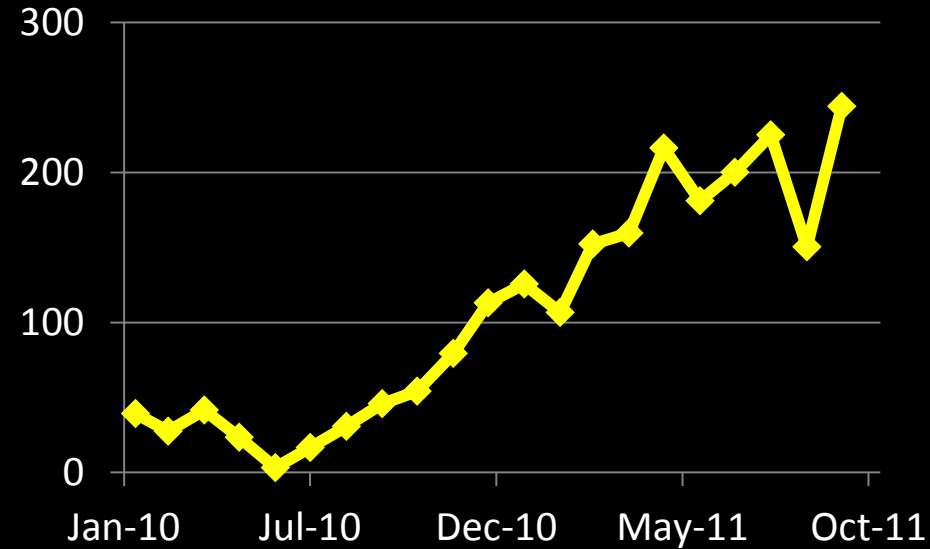
*with CGNet, MIT and the International Center for Journalists*

- Anyone can report news, issues, etc. in local language
- Submissions are reviewed by moderators over the Web
- Appropriate submissions are published:
  - For playback on audio channel
  - For browsing on Web
  - Some submissions seed stories for posting on CGNet site + list

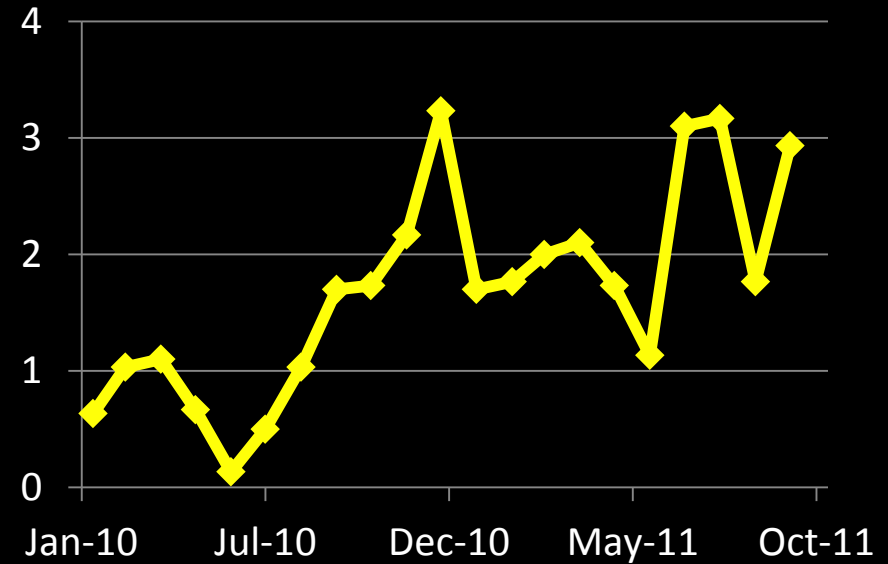


# Deployment: Since Feb 2010

## Calls per Day



## Posts per Day





**CGNet**  
इज्जत

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CGnet Swara is a platform to discuss issues related to Central Gondwana region in India. To record a message, call us on +91-80-4113 7280.

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NEWS  
Son  
pay

### Father struggles to get NREGA wages, son dies in hospital

Supriya Sharma, TNN, Jan 21, 2011, 10.04pm IST

Article

Comments (15)



Tags: National Rural Employment Program | MNREGA | Gram Adhikar Manch

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RAIPUR: A week after he lost his ailing son, and ten months after he worked on a village road project, Pitbasu Bhoi finally got the ten thousand rupees he had earned under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Program (MNREGA).

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# Research Challenges

- How to scale?
  - While maintaining usability
  - While maintaining quality
- How to pay for distribution of content
  - Leverage peer-to-peer media sharing

# Conclusions

- Social media looks to the phone in India
  - Mobile SMS services are the norm; voice is growing
  - Simple voice interaction allows high-impact content
- Huge untapped potential
  - 40M GupShup users vs. 850M mobile subscribers
  - Can we define the next social network on mobiles?