

Live Connected helps you manage your 'tribe'

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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Nthathi Mthembu is the founder of Live Connected, an app that helps parents manage their tribe's schedules easily by connecting everyone - whether it's an *au pair*, aunt, helper, eldest child, husband, neighbour, or other family members.



Live Connected has the ability to monitor, schedule pickups, send reminders, and open two-way communication within the "village" concerning the children's activities and milestones.

We find out more from Mthembu about the workings of the app, safety measures, and what's next on the cards for the startup...

How and why did Live Connected come about?

I am a working mother of two. Along with my husband who also works, we have always had to have help getting our children to all their activities, school etc. This has been challenging, especially as I started getting more responsibility at work.



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Live Connected was more of a personal need for me – I needed a safe space where I could get parental tools that would make it easier for me to manage my own personal schedule, my children's schedules, and to facilitate easier communication between myself and those who help me - without resorting to 'post-it' notes, spreadsheets, emails, WhatsApp etc.

■ **How does it work?**

This is a step by step process of how the app works:

- Create a profile.
- Build your family (kids, co-parents, granny). Your family will view your full schedule.
- Build your village – all those individuals that are part of your support network for your children's day-to-day needs (*au pairs*, drivers, neighbours, aunts etc.). Your "villagers" will get allocated specific pickups and drop-offs as required. Both your "villagers" and family members will receive an invitation to join your family and/or village.
- Create a comprehensive schedule for your family – daily, recurring, ad hoc activities (ballet, soccer, doctor's visits etc.).
- Allocate drop-offs and pickups to specific members of your family and "village".
- On allocation of a pickup, a calendar event is sent via email as an event in your diary.
- During specific pickup/drop-off events, you can "track" your *au pair* using our simple track functionality.
- The allocated "villager" can plan their route (Google Maps).
- Messaging/notifications capability between villagers and parent.
- Milestones – ability to capture specific milestones (first day of school/Billy can swim) and share with the parent/family.
- Birthday reminders for parent ("villagers" and family).

■ **Children's safety is imperative. Tell us about Live Connected's safety measures.**

In the scenario of the app, the parent is the administrator, and only the parent can invite "villagers" and family members to be part of the community. Without the invitation, you cannot access and view information.



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The parent also determines whether you are family or a village member. Family members can view the full schedule but "villagers" can only view allocated pickups.

Only the parent can edit the schedule or add and delete members – giving them the control required to keep their inner circle as they wish.

■ **What is Live Connected's competitive advantage/core differentiator?**

The app has the following features that are tailored specifically to families with school-going children:

- Create your enabling network of family and helpers ("villagers").
- Create a comprehensive schedule for all your kids – no limit on kids/activities. You can allocate a colour to each child.
- Allocate pickups to specific "villagers".
- On allocation of a pickup, a diary/calendar event is sent via email to both the "villager" and parent.
- During specific pickups, you can track the "villager".
- The ability to message/communicate with your "villagers".

- Birthday notifications ("villagers" and family).
- Notifications as events commence/end.
- The ability to view milestones.

Your "villagers" will have the following features:

- View daily allocated drop-offs/pickups.
- Ability to communicate with you during the day in relation to specific activities.
- Route planning via Google Maps for specific pickups.
- Ability to capture milestones and share with the parent.

There are many family calendar/organiser/list/recipes apps, however, most of them:

- have the option to add two adults – the prototypical mom and dad, with no provision to add a driver, sister, friend, neighbour, specifically a wider network of helpers.
- have no easy way to communicate/connect with the "village" through messaging after planning is done using the same app.
- have no apps for tracking young children without cellphones.
- have no apps that allow you to plan and communicate within the same app.
- no captured milestone to ensure that the parent never misses a moment.

The idea for an organising/scheduling app is not a new one but the connected app consolidates different requirements from families into one app, moves beyond just an app, and will ultimately provide services required by parents and families.



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■ ***You only went live roughly a month ago - what are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome so far?***

While the app only went live a month ago the process has been ongoing since 2016. The idea for the app originated then and a company was formed in 2016. In January 2017, we were incubated with Innovation Hub where the business model progressed significantly.

In June 2017 we had a working Android app which we piloted with a group of mothers along with the Innovation Hub. The pilot brought with it changes that have been incorporated into the app now. We also applied for and were granted a Mlab grant to "proof our concept". This process has culminated in the app as it is now. Funding has been, and continues to be, a challenge.

■ ***So, what's next?***

This app is the beginning of implementing a full business model for us and as we have been building the app we have been working with Innovation Hub to refine the model.

As mentioned, funding has been a big challenge for us and continues to be. Our next step is to get a significant number of users on the app to see where improvements are required. We will also be embarking on a fundraising round to implement the rest of our business model – whereby parents have the option to make us "part of their village" and allow us to do drop-offs and pickups on their behalf.

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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