
University of the child
A Global Ecosystem Dedicated to High-Quality Early Childhood Development
Building the institutions, environments and systems that help children flourish.
Stellenbosch, South Africa
Institutional Development Plan 2026–2030

ECOSYSTEM

Not A University, A Global Ecosytem

The University of the Child is not a traditional university.

It does not exist primarily to educate students.

It exists to accelerate humanity's ability to help children flourish.

By gathering the world's best knowledge.

By testing ideas in real communities.

By training educators and caregivers.

By creating inspiring stories.

By building tools that make knowledge accessible.

By connecting people, organisations and communities around a shared mission.

The campus is only one manifestation.

The ecosystem is the institution.

"The estate is the physical heart of the movement. The ecosystem is the institution."



ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

Research Network
Discovering and connecting the world's best knowledge on childhood and human flourishing.

Living Laboratories
Testing and refining ideas in schools, communities and real-world environments.

Indaba Institute
Training educators, caregivers and leaders.

Studios
Creating stories, media and learning experiences that inspire action.

Open Indaba
Making high-quality learning accessible globally.

AI Guides
Providing personalised support at scale.

Global Coalition
Connecting partners, institutions and communities worldwide.

University Estate
The physical heart of the ecosystem.

THE REVELATION

The most important years of life are the least invested in.

The foundations of health, learning, wellbeing, character and human potential are established during the earliest years of life.

Yet humanity has built thousands of universities dedicated to adults and remarkably few institutions dedicated to understanding, improving and scaling what helps children flourish.

The University of the Child exists to change that.

Not by creating another school.

Not by creating another university.

But by creating a global ecosystem dedicated to discovering, refining and sharing the world's best practices for helping children, families and communities flourish.

Because when children flourish, societies flourish.

And when societies flourish, the future becomes possible.

"The future of humanity is shaped long before children enter university."





THE REVELATION

Humanity Built Thousands of Universities for Adults. None for Childhood.

We invest billions in higher education, leadership, innovation and research.

Yet the foundations upon which all of these depend are established during the earliest years of life.

The University of the Child exists to help humanity close that gap.



ECOSYSTEM

Built On Practice, Not Theory

The University does not start from zero.
It starts from a growing foundation of people, partnerships, knowledge and experience.

The University of the Child does not begin with a campus.
It begins with years of experience working alongside educators, families and communities.

Across multiple countries and contexts, Indaba and its partners have been developing, testing and refining practical approaches that help children flourish.

The University brings these efforts together into a single ecosystem capable of learning faster, sharing better and scaling what works.

Because the future does not need another theory.

It needs places, people and systems that demonstrate what is possible.

"The University does not begin with a campus. It begins with evidence."

WHAT ALREADY EXISTS

Teacher Development
Transforming learning environments through world-class educator training.

Living Laboratories
Learning alongside communities in South Africa, Tanzania and beyond.

Indaba Institute
Training educators, caregivers and leaders.

Global Content & Storytelling
Making knowledge accessible through media and learning experiences.

Research & Expert Network
Connecting leading practitioners, researchers and innovators.

Digital Infrastructure
Building tools that make high-quality learning available anywhere.

Global Partnerships
Working alongside schools, organizations, communities and experts around the world.



THE REVELATION

For The First Time In History, The Conditions Exist.

Humanity has never known more about helping children flourish.
Across neuroscience, child development, education, psychology, health, community development and human flourishing, extraordinary knowledge already exists.

At the same time, new technologies now make it possible to connect people, knowledge and communities at unprecedented scale.

The challenge is no longer discovering what works.

The challenge is bringing the best ideas together, testing them in practice and making them accessible to everyone.

The University of the Child exists to become that bridge.
A place where research meets reality.

Where local wisdom meets global expertise.
Where innovation becomes implementation.
And where what works can spread far beyond a single place.

THE INGREDIENTS ARE ALREADY HERE

Montessori - Neuroscience - Child - Development Research - Positive Psychology - Regenerative Education - Indigenous Wisdom - Artificial Intelligence - Storytelling & Media - Community Innovation - Global Networks - Hospitality & Place-Making - Living Laboratories - etc.

The opportunity is not to invent something entirely new.
The opportunity is to bring together what humanity already knows and make it work better together.



PHASES

Gather, Demonstrate, Enable

The University of the Child is designed to grow organically.
Not as a construction project.
As a movement.

PHASE 1 - GATHER

Bring together the world's best knowledge, people, partners and practices.
Build the ecosystem.
Strengthen the Institute.
Develop the content.
Expand the research network.
Launch fellowships and collaborations.
The goal is not to build buildings.
The goal is to gather the ingredients.

PHASE 2 - DEMONSTRATE

Create a living demonstration of what childhood can become.
A place where visitors can experience the ecosystem in action.
A place where learning, hospitality, nature, research and community come together.
The estate becomes the physical heart of the movement.

PHASE 3 - ENABLE

Help communities everywhere access what works.
Through training.
Technology.
Media.
AI Guides.
Partners.
Schools.
Governments.
Community organisations.

The goal is not to bring the world to the campus.
The goal is to bring the campus to the world.

OUR AMBITION

To help accelerate the world's transition to high-quality early childhood development.

UNIVERSITY OF THE CHILD

A Place of

Beauty

Discovery

Community

Learning

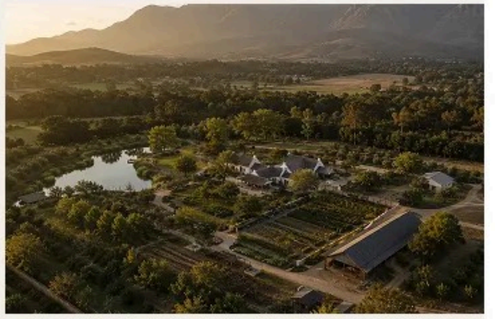
Stewardship

Belonging















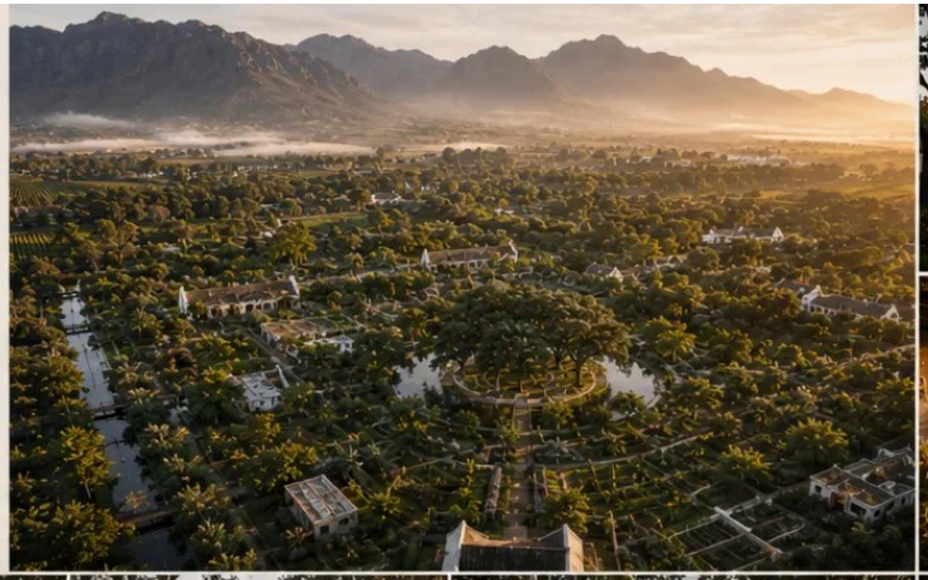


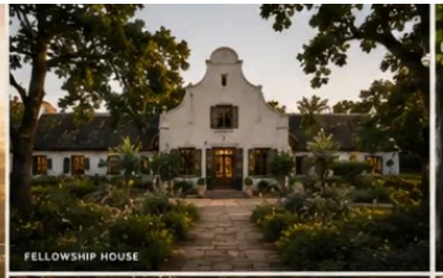
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CHILD

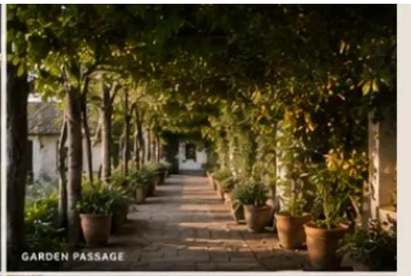
PHASE 3 — THE ESTATE

A LIVING LANDSCAPE FOR CHILDHOOD, HUMAN FLOURISHING AND LIFELONG LEARNING.

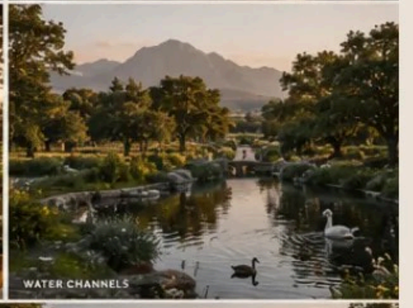
SPIER WINE FARM
STELLENBOSCH WINELANDS
SOUTH AFRICA




FELLOWSHIP HOUSE

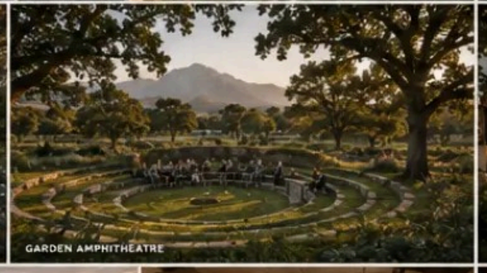

GARDEN PASSAGE


VERANDA & VINEYARD VIEW


WATER CHANNELS

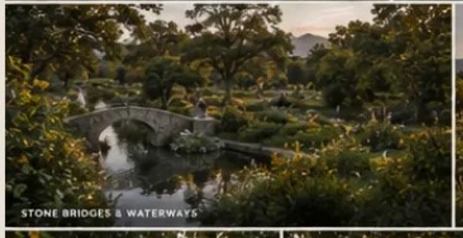

CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY GARDEN


NATURE PLAY & LEARNING LANDSCAPE


GARDEN AMPHITHEATRE


LONG TABLE PAVILION


RESEARCH & BOTANICAL GARDENS

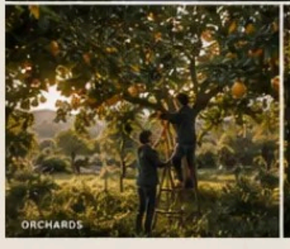

STONE BRIDGES & WATERWAYS

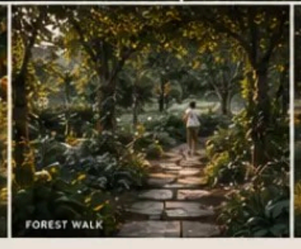

REGENERATIVE FARMLAND

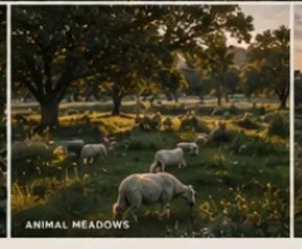

GUEST LODGE INTERIOR


COURTYARD

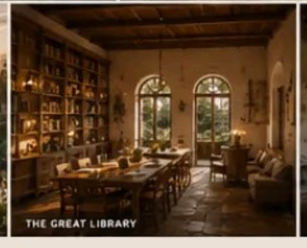

FARM COTTAGE

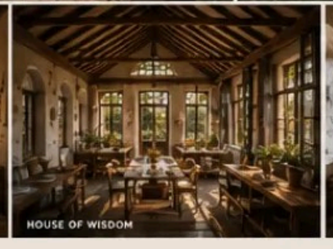

ORCHARDS


FOREST WALK


ANIMAL MEADOWS


CONTEMPLATION GARDEN


THE GREAT LIBRARY


HOUSE OF WISDOM


CRAFT VILLAGE / WORKSHOPS

ROOTED IN NATURE. CULTIVATED BY GENERATIONS. DESIGNED FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

LANDSCAPE FIRST • NATURE SECOND • AGRICULTURE THIRD • HOSPITALITY FOURTH • COMMUNITY FIFTH • LEARNING SIXTH • ARCHITECTURE LAST

PHASE 1 — THE SEED

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CHILD

A living village within a garden
Stellenbosch Winelands, South Africa

CONCEPT

The University of the Child is not a campus.
It is a living estate.
A place where learning, hospitality, farming, childhood and nature coexist.
A timeless estate that feels as though it evolved over centuries.

SCALE

Approx. 4 hectares
80% landscape
20% buildings
Human scale. Intimate. Walkable.

MASTERPLAN

At the heart: a circular Forum with ancient oaks, reflecting water, stone terraces and water channels.

Around the Forum:

- Founders House
- Library
- Learning Pavilion
- Media Studio
- Long Table Pavilion
- Retreat Lodge (20 keys)
- Food Gardens
- Medicinal Gardens
- Orchards
- Indigenous Fynbos Gardens
- Children's Discovery Garden
- Small Courtyards
- Stone Cloisters
- Water Gardens

ARCHITECTURE

Inspired by Babylonstoren and historic Cape Dutch farm buildings.
White limewashed walls. Natural stone.
Clay roof tiles. Timber pergolas.
Deep verandas. Courtyard houses.
Rammed earth. Natural materials only.
No building higher than two storeys.

LANDSCAPE

A world-class botanical estate.
Extensive edible gardens, orchards, vineyards, olive groves and fynbos meadows.
Water channels, ponds, stone bridges, oak avenues and garden rooms.
Every path reveals a new experience.
No visible roads. No visible parking.
Visitors move on foot.

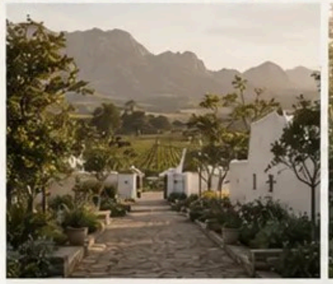
ATMOSPHERE

Soft morning mist. Golden sunrise.
Terrence Malick atmosphere.
Emmanuel Lubezki cinematography.
Quiet luxury. Organic elegance.
Deep sense of peace.
Feels as if it has existed for 200 years.

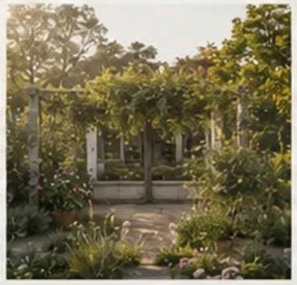
NEGATIVE PROMPT – DO NOT INCLUDE

Large institutional buildings, university campus, business school, convention center, corporate headquarters, glass architecture, skyscrapers, futuristic design, Tuscan resort, luxury golf estate, theme park, Disney aesthetics, oversized monuments, excessive density, visible parking lots, visible roads, suburban development.

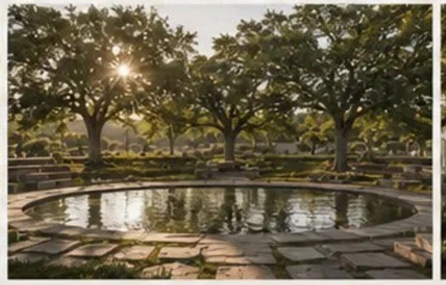




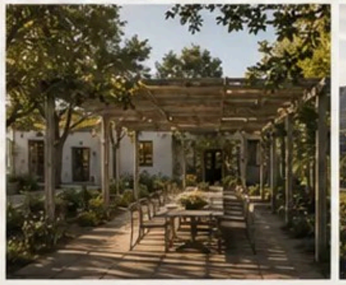
ENTRANCE EXPERIENCE



GARDEN ROOM



THE FORUM



LONG TABLE PAVILION



VIEW TOWARD HELDERBERG

PHASE 2 — THE VILLAGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CHILD

The University of the Child has grown
into a thriving village estate.
A place for learning, hospitality, research,
agriculture and childhood.
Rooted in the landscape. Shaped by time.
A living ecosystem for future generations.

SCALE

Approx. 15 hectares
80% landscape
20% buildings
Human scale. Walkable. Timeless.

MASTERPLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Botanical gardens as the heart
The Forum as the symbolic centre
A network of garden courtyards and water
Woven together by footpaths and bridges
No roads. No parking. Only pathways.

PROGRAMME

Children's Village
Research Courtyard
Innovation Pavilions
Fellows Lodge
Amphitheatre
Expanded Media Studios
Craft Workshops
Market Garden
Food Forest
Regenerative Farm
Animal Courtyards
Hospitality Village (60 keys)
Fellowship Residences

ARCHITECTURE

Inspired by Babylonstoren, Spier and
historic Cape Dutch farm werfs.
White limewashed walls. Natural stone.
Clay roof tiles. Timber pergolas.
Courtyards, verandas and garden rooms.
Built lightly. In harmony with nature.
Buildings never exceed two storeys.

LANDSCAPE

World-class botanical estate.
Extensive gardens, orchards, vineyards,
olive groves and fynbos meadows.
Water channels, ponds and wetlands.
Oak avenues and shaded walkways.
Designed for discovery and well-being.
Visitors move on foot.

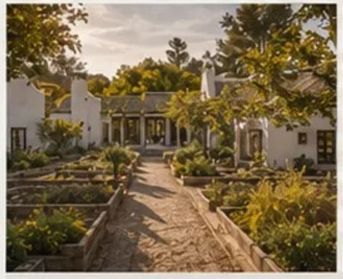
ATMOSPHERE

Golden sunrise. Soft mist over the vines.
Long shadows. Quiet luxury.
Terrence Malick atmosphere.
Emmanuel Lubezki cinematography.
A place that feels loved for centuries.

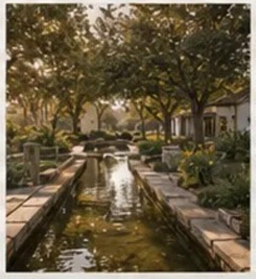
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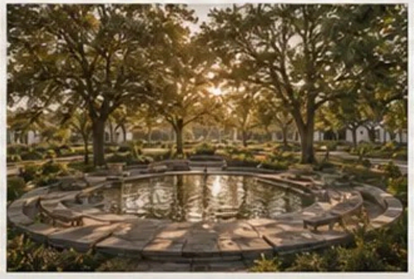




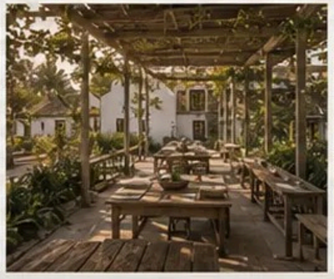
GARDEN COURTYARD



WATER CHANNELS & BRIDGES



THE FORUM



CRAFT WORKSHOPS



VIEW TOWARD HELDERBERG

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CHILD

PHASE 3 — THE ESTATE MASTER PLAN

STELLENBOSCH WINELANDS
SOUTH AFRICA

LEGEND

1 THE FORUM
2 REFLECTING BASIN
3 OAK GROVE
4 AMPHITHEATRE GARDEN
5 BOTANICAL GARDENS
6 CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY GARDENS
7 NATURE PLAY + OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS
8 RESEARCH GARDENS
9 FOOD FOREST
10 KITCHEN GARDENS
11 ORCHARDS
12 VINEYARDS
13 REGENERATIVE FARM FIELDS
14 ANIMAL MEADOWS
15 WATER GARDENS
16 WETLANDS + PONDS
17 CRAFT VILLAGE + WORKSHOPS
18 LONG TABLE PAVILIONS
19 HOUSE OF WISDOM
20 GREAT LIBRARY
21 MEDIA + MAKER STUDIOS
22 FELLOWSHIP HOUSES
23 GUEST COTTAGES + GARDEN LODGES
24 FARM LODGES
25 FAMILY RESIDENCES
26 COURTYARD HOUSES
27 STONE CLOISTERS + COURTYARDS
28 IRRIGATION CHANNELS
29 FOREST WALKS + NATURE TRAILS
30 CONTEMPLATION GARDENS
31 ENTRY GARDEN (PEDESTRIAN)
32 SERVICE YARD (HIDDEN)
33 APIARY + POLLINATOR GARDEN
34 BIRD SANCTUARY
35 OLIVE GROVE

EXISTING TREES
PROPOSED TREES
WATER CHANNELS
FOOTPATHS
VINEYARDS
ORCHARDS
FOOD GARDENS
REGENERATIVE FIELDS
WETLANDS

N

0 25 50 100 150 200m


“The Estate Is Not The Destination.
It Is The Catalyst.”

ESTATE

The Physical Heart of A Global Movement

The University of the Child is more than a campus.

It is a living ecosystem where childhood, learning, hospitality, nature, research and community come together.

A place where visitors can experience what high-quality childhood development looks and feels like.

A place where educators, researchers, families, innovators and community leaders gather to learn from one another.

A place designed not only to generate ideas, but to demonstrate them.

The estate serves as:

A Demonstration Environment

A Fellowship Centre

A Research & Innovation Hub

A Media & Storytelling Studio

A Gathering Place

A Global Headquarters

And above all, a place of beauty, wonder and possibility.

Inspired by the world's great learning communities, regenerative estates and hospitality destinations, the University Estate is designed to become a place people remember long after they leave.

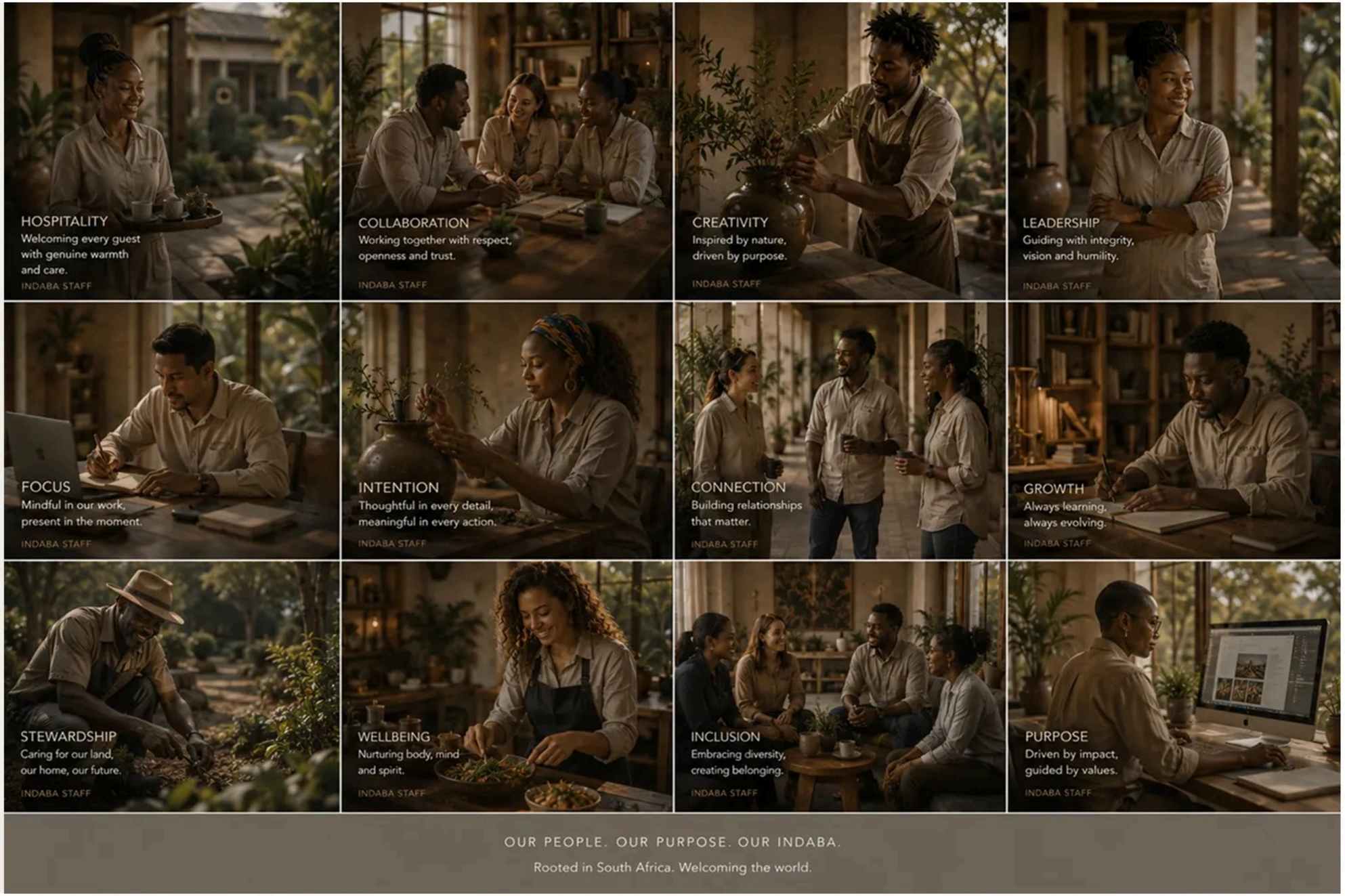
Not because of its buildings.

But because of the conversations, relationships and experiences it makes possible.



“The estate is not the institution.

It is the place where the institution becomes visible.”



WHY HERE?

What Happens Here?

The University of the Child is designed as a place where knowledge becomes practice.

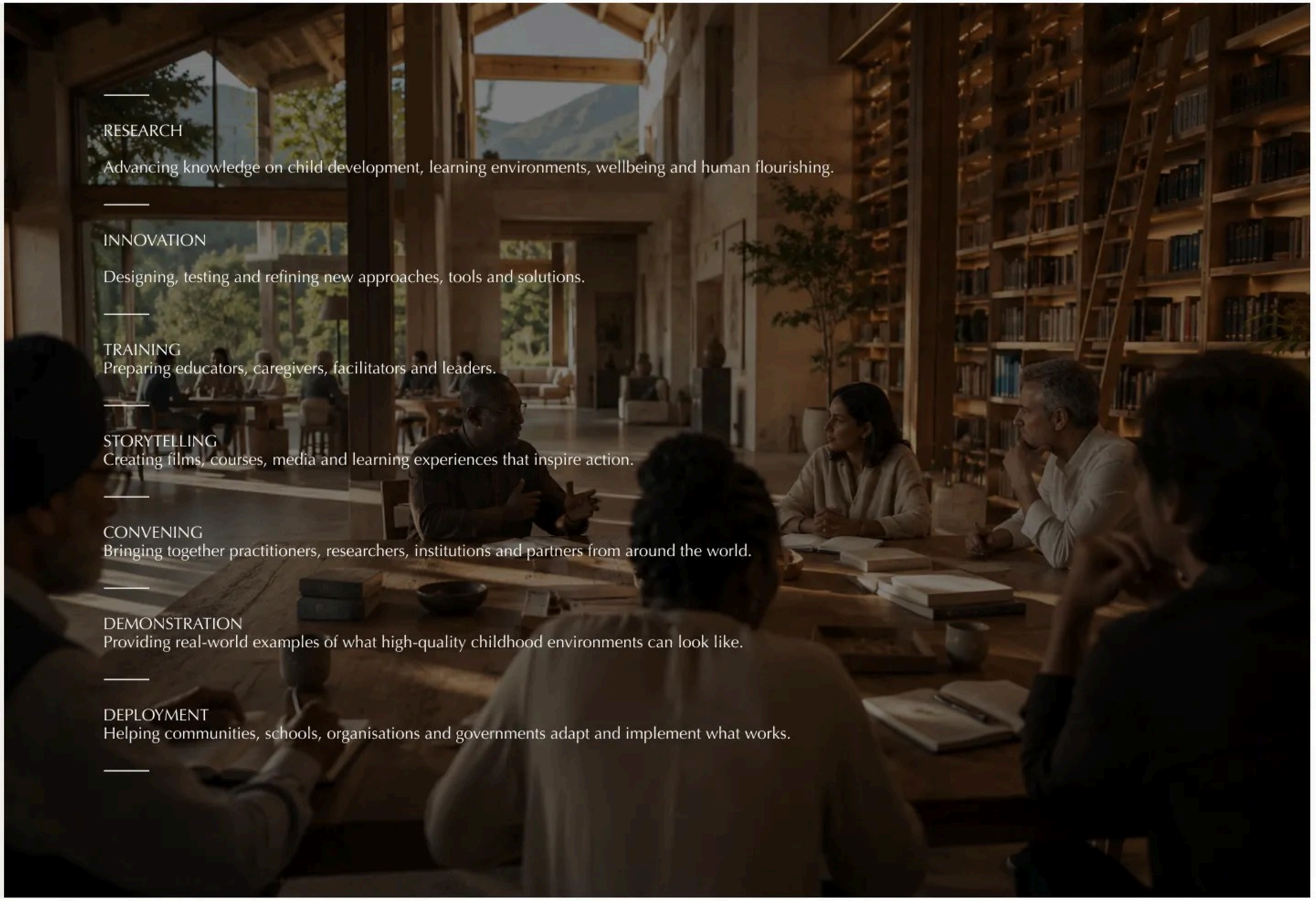
A place where ideas are tested, refined and shared.

A place where researchers, educators, caregivers, innovators and communities work together to improve the environments that shape childhood.

The estate serves seven interconnected functions.

The goal is not to concentrate knowledge in one place.

The goal is to accelerate its movement into the world.



RESEARCH

Advancing knowledge on child development, learning environments, wellbeing and human flourishing.

INNOVATION

Designing, testing and refining new approaches, tools and solutions.

TRAINING
Preparing educators, caregivers, facilitators and leaders.

STORYTELLING
Creating films, courses, media and learning experiences that inspire action.

CONVENING
Bringing together practitioners, researchers, institutions and partners from around the world.

DEMONSTRATION
Providing real-world examples of what high-quality childhood environments can look like.

DEPLOYMENT
Helping communities, schools, organisations and governments adapt and implement what works.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Success is not measured by buildings....

Success is not measured by buildings.
It is measured by the lives transformed through the ecosystem they support.
The University of the Child exists to help strengthen the environments that shape childhood.
From families and educators to communities, systems and societies.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

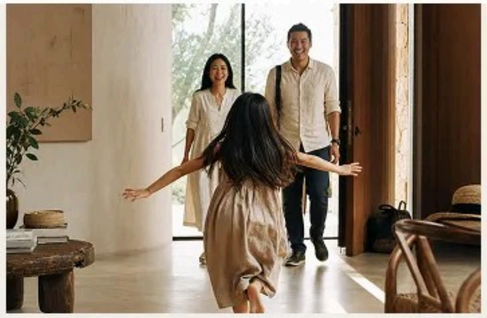
Children
Stronger foundations for learning, health, wellbeing and character.
↓
Families
More confident, supported and empowered caregivers.
↓
Educators
Better prepared teachers, facilitators and mentors.
↓
Communities
Stronger local ecosystems where children can thrive.
↓
Systems
Improved policies, practices and investment in childhood.
↓
Countries
A global movement accelerating human flourishing.

OUR LONG-TERM ASPIRATION

- Millions of children reached.
- Hundreds of thousands of educators empowered.
- Thousands of communities strengthened.
- Knowledge made accessible worldwide.
- A global ecosystem dedicated to helping every child flourish.

The estate is the catalyst.
The ecosystem is the multiplier.
The child is the reason.

















WHY HERE?

Rooted in The Cape, Connected To The World

The University of the Child is envisioned in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

A region uniquely positioned at the intersection of beauty, innovation, education and community transformation.

The Cape Winelands offer something increasingly rare: Space to think. Space to gather. Space to build.

And space to demonstrate new possibilities.

From this setting, the University can remain deeply connected to real communities while welcoming partners, researchers, educators and supporters from around the world.

WHY STELLENBOSCH

- Natural Beauty
- One of the world's most inspiring cultural and agricultural landscapes.
- Global Accessibility
- Direct access to Cape Town and international networks.
- Educational Excellence
- Proximity to leading universities, researchers and innovators.
- Hospitality Ecosystem
- World-class hospitality, conferences and visitor experiences.
- Living Laboratories
- Direct connection to communities, schools and real-world implementation.
- Global South Perspective

A unique opportunity to help shape solutions that are both locally grounded and globally relevant.

The University is not being built in isolation.

It is being built within an ecosystem already rich in knowledge, creativity, entrepreneurship and possibility.



EXPANSION

From Campus To The World

The University of the Child is not designed to serve only those who visit the estate.

Its purpose is to help improve the environments that shape childhood everywhere.

The campus serves as a place to gather, test, refine and demonstrate.

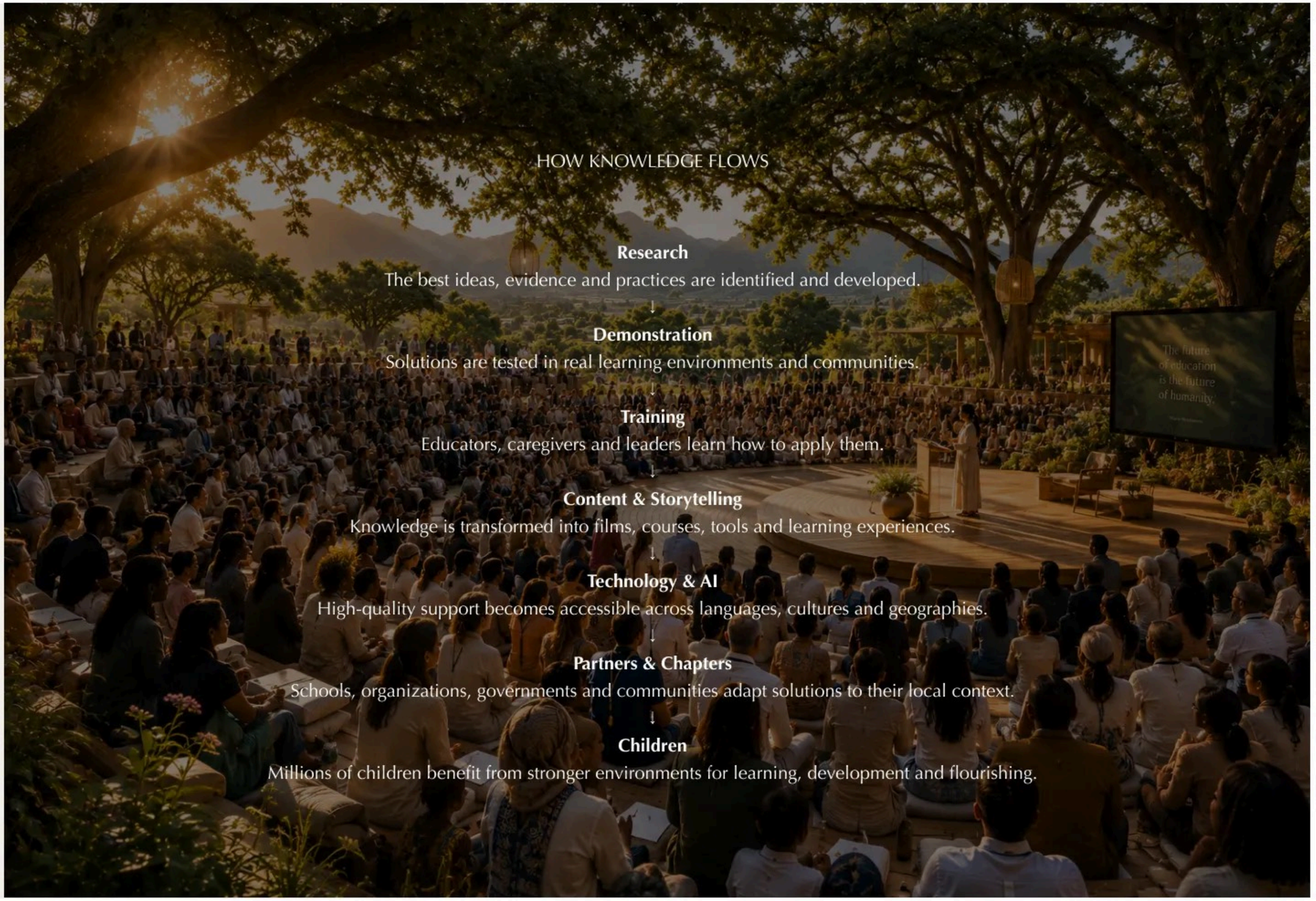
The ecosystem serves as the mechanism for sharing and scaling what works.

THE CAMPUS IS THE LABORATORY. THE ECOSYSTEM IS THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM.

A child in Stellenbosch.
A teacher in Tanzania.
A caregiver in India.
A parent in Brazil.
A school in France.
A community in Indonesia.

All should be able to benefit from what is learned, created and refined through the University ecosystem.

The goal is not to build the world's most impressive campus.
The goal is to help build a world where every child has the opportunity to flourish.



INVITATION

Every Great Institution Begins With Few Builders

The University of the Child is not a fundraising campaign.

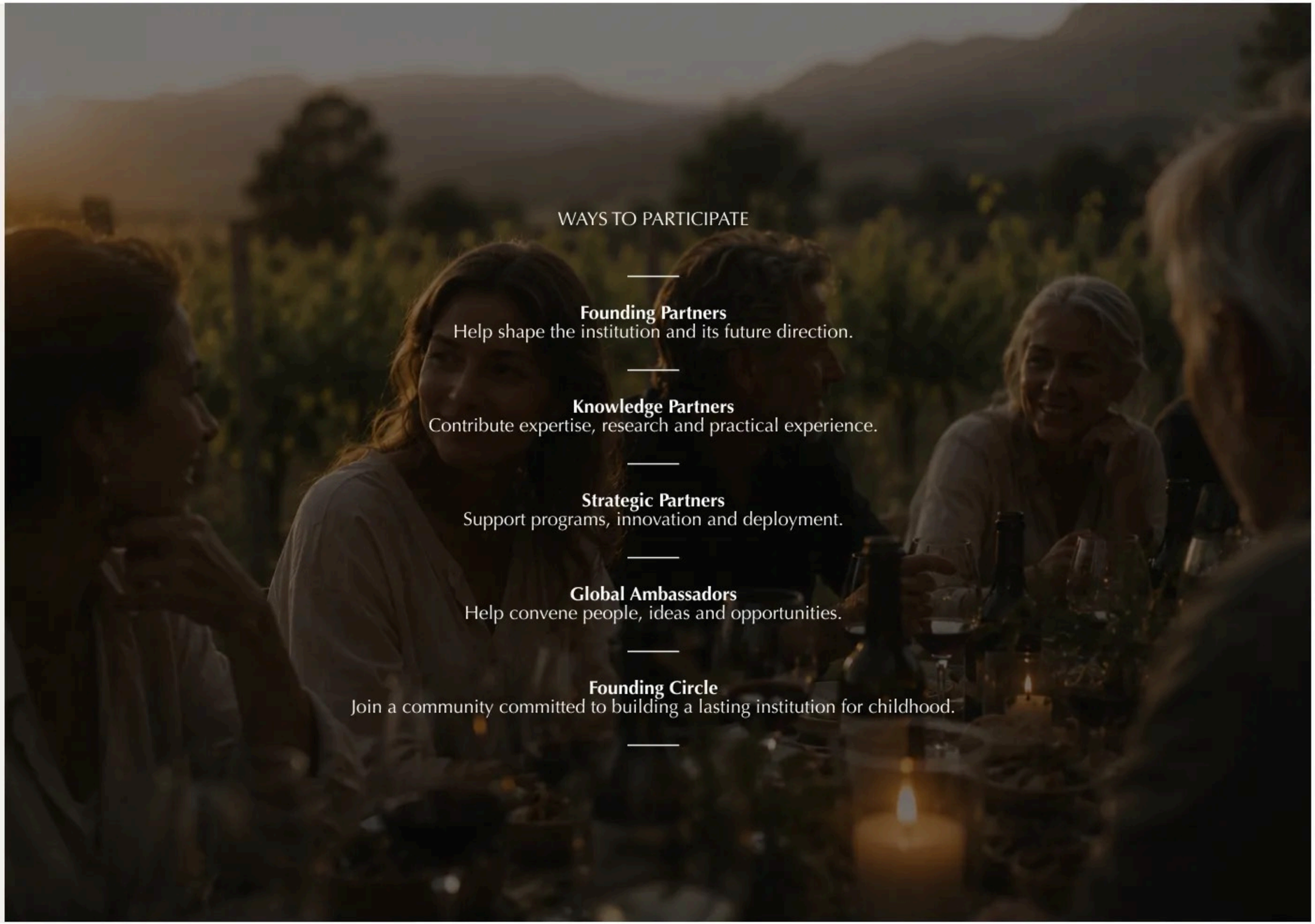
It is an institution-building project.

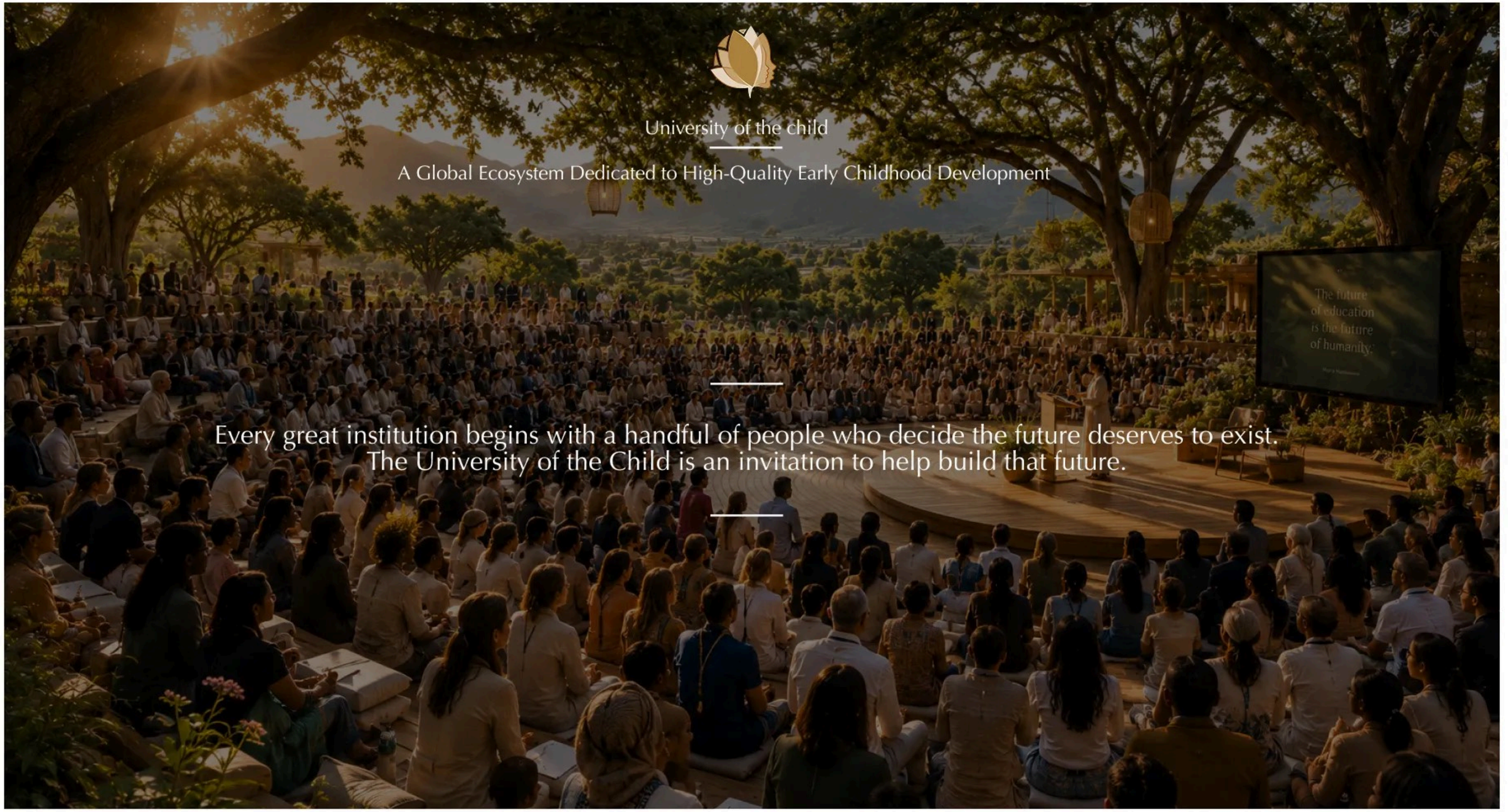
A long-term effort to create a place, a network and a body of knowledge capable of serving future generations.

Like every great institution, it begins with a small group of people who choose to invest their time, resources, relationships and expertise in something larger than themselves.

We invite foundations, families, universities, companies and visionaries to help build this next chapter.

Not as donors.
Not as sponsors.
But as founding stewards.





University of the child

A Global Ecosystem Dedicated to High-Quality Early Childhood Development

Every great institution begins with a handful of people who decide the future deserves to exist.
The University of the Child is an invitation to help build that future.