

Nurse Practitioner and Global Health Leader Shannon Fernando Delivers TEDxBeverlyGrove Talk on the Permission Principle

Founder of Alabaster International challenges how the aid sector defines and measures help

WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA, UNITED STATES, July 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Shannon Fernando, a family nurse practitioner and the founder of the global nonprofit [Alabaster International](#), delivered a talk at [TEDxBeverlyGrove](#) 2026 arguing that hunger is not primarily a scarcity problem, but a permission problem.

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Hunger isn't a scarcity problem. It's a permission problem.”

Fernando told the TEDxBeverlyGrove audience.

Fernando spoke under the TEDxBeverlyGrove 2026 theme "Reimagining the Possible," drawing on her organization's work across Kenya, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka. Her talk traced a shift in her own approach to

humanitarian work. It began with a 2019 medical camp in Turkana, Kenya, where a local women's group leader named Mary told her the community needed food rather than medicine. That moment eventually led to a multi-year effort to bring the drought-resistant crop Enset across the border from Ethiopia into Kenya for the first time in its history.

"Hunger isn't a scarcity problem," Fernando told the TEDxBeverlyGrove audience. "It's a permission problem."

Fernando described how her organization worked for nearly two years to earn institutional trust from Ethiopian officials before securing permission to introduce Enset into Kenya, and how that institutional permission alone was not sufficient. Her team also had to earn the trust of farmers themselves, a process that culminated in women farmers in Kenya's Letoire region becoming the country's first-ever Enset Ambassadors.

The talk also challenged commonly cited humanitarian aid metrics, including meals served, hectares planted, and tons of food aid delivered, arguing that these figures are often easier to count than they are to interpret, and that lasting impact should instead be measured by whether

households are sustainably nourished.

Fernando is the founder and CEO of Alabaster International, working to advance healthcare access, women's entrepreneurship, and food security for indigenous women and their families. Her work has been recognized with the Humanitarian Award from the 15th Annual Taste Awards, features in NPR, the Los Angeles Times, and Spectrum News, and a 2024 Commitment-Maker distinction from the Clinton Global Initiative. Alabaster International has also joined the U.S. State Department's Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils Champion Program and was named a 2025 Food Planet Prize Longlist nominee.

Fernando's talk was part of the TEDxBeverlyGrove 2026 speaker series and will be released online in the coming months. More information on Shannon Fernando is available at her LinkedIn profile, [linkedin.com/in/shannon-fernando-msn-fnp](https://www.linkedin.com/in/shannon-fernando-msn-fnp), and on Alabaster International at alabasterinternational.org.



Shannon Fernando, MSN-FNP-C,
Nurse Practitioner and Global
Health Leader

About TEDxBeverlyGrove

TEDxBeverlyGrove is an independently organized TED event devoted to ideas that transform culture, leadership, and human potential. The 2026 theme, "Reimagining the Possible," invited leaders across disciplines to rethink how we navigate uncertainty, rebuild from loss, and discover what becomes possible when endurance replaces inspiration.

About Shannon Fernando

Shannon Fernando, MSN-FNP-C, is a family nurse practitioner and global nonprofit leader advancing healthcare access, women's entrepreneurship, and food security for indigenous women and their families in East Africa and South Asia. She is the Founder and CEO of Alabaster International and works directly in remote regions of Kenya, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka to elevate local voices and advance equity and justice for marginalized women.

Her work has been recognized with the Humanitarian Award from the 15th Annual Taste Awards, Los Angeles Times nominations, and features in NPR, LA Times, and Spectrum News. Named a 2024 Commitment-Maker by the Clinton Global Initiative, Fernando leads Alabaster's initiatives to combat hunger in East Africa. Alabaster has also joined the U.S. State Department's Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) Champion Program, was named a 2025 Food Planet Prize Longlist nominee, and was selected as an F5 Tech for Good winner.

[About Marvin V. Acuna](#)

Marvin V. Acuna is a TEDx Organizer and Producer. In that role, he curates speakers, ideas, and the architecture of a high-trust live stage. Separate from his work as a TEDx producer, Acuna advises leaders, founders, attorneys, and public figures as a speaking coach and talk architect. He helps clients uncover the idea inside their story, sharpen their message, and deliver it with clarity, authority, and impact. He also serves as Head of Business Strategy for The Lawyers Roundtable and is the founder of MoBal Systems.

About TED

TED is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to discovering, debating and spreading ideas that spark conversation, deepen understanding and drive meaningful change. Our organization is devoted to curiosity, reason, wonder and the pursuit of knowledge, without an agenda. We welcome people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world and connection with others, and we invite everyone to engage with ideas and activate them in your community.

TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, but today it spans a multitude of worldwide communities and initiatives exploring everything from science and business to education, arts and global issues. In addition to the TED Talks curated from our annual conferences and published on TED.com, we produce original podcasts, short video series, animated educational lessons (TED-Ed) and TV programs that are translated into more than 100 languages. Through The Audacious Project, TED has helped catalyze \$6.6 billion in funding for projects that support bold solutions to the world's most urgent challenges. Follow TED on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and X.

About TEDx, x = independently organized event

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TED Talks video and live speakers combine to spark deep discussion and connection. These local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x = independently organized TED event. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events are self-organized.

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