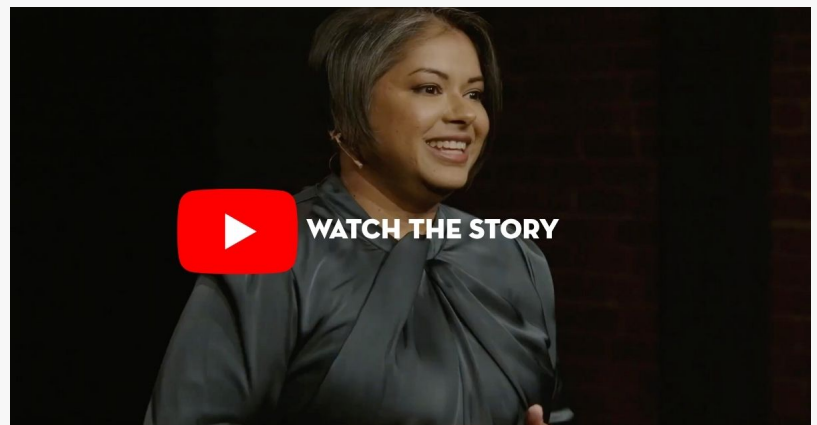


# 'Hunger Isn't a Scarcity Problem. It's a Permission Problem': New TEDx Talk Challenges How to Fight Hunger

*Alabaster founder Shannon Fernando-Rubera connects "The Permission Principle" to an indigenous Ethiopian crop and the women who farm it.*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The full TEDxBeverlyGrove talk from [Alabaster International](#) founder and CEO Shannon Fernando-Rubera, MSN, FNP-C, "[The Permission Principle](#)," is now available worldwide, bringing a provocative question to the global conversation around hunger:



Founder and CEO Shannon Fernando-Rubera speaks at TEDx Beverly Grove

What if the solutions already exist, but we're standing in their way?

“

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

*Shannon Fernando-Rubera*

Fernando-Rubera challenges the idea that hunger is primarily a scarcity problem. Drawing on Alabaster International's work in East Africa, she argues that potentially transformative solutions can already exist within communities but fail to spread because of institutional barriers, outside assumptions, and a failure to

listen to the people closest to the problem.

“Hunger isn't a scarcity problem. It's a permission problem,” Fernando-Rubera tells the TEDxBeverlyGrove audience.

The talk traces a journey that began during a medical outreach in Turkana, Kenya, when a local women's leader told Fernando-Rubera that her community did not need more medicine. They needed food.

That conversation eventually led Fernando-Rubera to Enset, a drought-tolerant indigenous Ethiopian crop sometimes called the “Tree Against Hunger.” Although Enset has sustained communities in Ethiopia for generations, it had never been cultivated across the border in Kenya.

Alabaster International spent years working alongside local communities, agricultural experts, and government partners to change that.

In 2023, Enset crossed the Ethiopian-Kenyan border. In July 2026, Alabaster International and its partners celebrated the first cultivated Enset harvest on Kenyan soil.

The experience became the foundation for the three-part framework Fernando-Rubera introduces in the [TEDx talk](#):

Proximity. Permission. Propagation.

Get close enough to understand the real problem. Ask permission rather than prescribing a solution. Then build systems that allow locally led solutions to spread without remaining dependent on outsiders.

The release comes as Alabaster International returns to the Clinton Global Initiative for the third consecutive year as a Commitment Maker.

At CGI 2026, Alabaster International is launching a new Commitment to



Shannon Fernando-Rubera holds the first Enset plant to be harvested in Kenya



Shannon Fernando-Rubera stands with arms crossed wearing a green top

Action in partnership with Live Love & Give, expanding the organization's community-led work into Sri Lanka. For Fernando-Rubera, who was born in Sri Lanka, the initiative brings the principles at the center of her TEDx talk into a deeply personal new chapter.

"Communities closest to the challenge should also be closest to the solution," Fernando-Rubera said in announcing Alabaster's return to CGI. "This year is especially meaningful to me."

The organization previously made CGI Commitments to Action focused on Enset food security and climate resilience in East Africa, including its EnsetAI Carbon Agroforestry Initiative.

The timing also coincides with the United Nations-designated International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026, which highlights the often-overlooked role women play throughout global food systems.

For Fernando-Rubera, that connection is central.

The Permission Principle asks governments, funders, nonprofits, and humanitarian organizations to reconsider not only how solutions are designed, but who gets to design them.

Rather than measuring success only through activity — meals distributed, hectares planted or tons of food delivered — Fernando-Rubera argues for looking at whether communities are sustainably nourished and whether locally rooted solutions remain after outside organizations leave.

The full 19-minute TEDxBeverlyGrove talk, "The Permission Principle," is now available on YouTube.

Additional information, updates from the Enset initiative, and ways to follow Alabaster International's work are available at:

[alabasterinternational.org/the-permission-principle](https://alabasterinternational.org/the-permission-principle)

About Shannon Fernando-Rubera

Shannon Fernando-Rubera, MSN, FNP-C, is a family nurse practitioner, global nonprofit leader, and Founder and CEO of Alabaster International. Her work focuses on healthcare access, women's entrepreneurship, food security, and community-led development across Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sri Lanka.

The Clinton Global Initiative, the U.S. State Department's Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils Champion Program, the Food Planet Prize, Direct Relief, and other organizations and media outlets have recognized her work.

## About Alabaster International

Alabaster International is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit working alongside communities in Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sri Lanka to develop locally led solutions in healthcare, education, food security, and economic opportunity.

Alabaster International has been selected as a Clinton Global Initiative Commitment Maker in 2024, 2025, and 2026.

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