



**EARTH MEDICINE**  
PHYSICAL REHABILITATION



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2022  
**Annual Report**

*Get to know our work*



# EARTH MEDICINE

PHYSICAL REHABILITATION



EARTH MEDICINE

Earth Medicine as an organisation has emerged from the need to provide therapeutic help to asylum seekers arriving on Lesbos. Since its creation as a project until today, we have grown together, we have learned from each patient, from each of their personal, family and cultural histories and also from each injury we have treated. This dynamic has given us the opportunity to combine therapies to develop tailor-made therapeutic treatments attending each person particular needs.

Today, our efforts are not only focus on alleviating asylum seekers injuries but also to support with our therapeutic knowledge's the local community of Mitilini and its surrounding. It is our way to plant the seeds to strength communities under one purpose: learning to work together, creating suitable projects to support the most vulnerable among our community and ultimately contribute a little or a lot to the integration process, despite of our cultural differences.

Fabiola Velasquez  
Founder

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## Mission & Vision

Earth Medicine exists to provide sustainable, therapeutic solutions for the most vulnerable members of society. This is in response to the problem that many asylum seekers on the island of Lesbos (Greece) do not receive necessary treatment for chronic and severe health problems. As the asylum process can take years, these untreated issues invariably worsen during their time at the camp.

Earth Medicine is a registered, non-profit organisation created by a group of physical therapists and health professionals in 2018. We offer multi-disciplinary physical rehabilitation treatments to asylum seekers fleeing from countries in conflict. Many of these people have sustained serious injuries from enduring torture, sexual violence, bomb blasts, gun shots and a treacherous journey to safety.

We understand that intense psychological and emotional trauma affects the chemistry of the whole body and can prevent physical healing, so the mind/body connection is never ignored. Through our work, we have seen that directly addressing trauma is not the most effective therapeutic approach for dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the context of refugee camp. Therefore, we focus our efforts on alleviating bodily pain first and stabilise physiological functions through acupuncture, homeopathy, nutritional monitoring, physiotherapy and therapeutic massage.

Our vision is to make treatment for chronic health conditions accessible to all.







## Who we are

The Earth Medicine therapeutic team consists of experienced specialists in the fields of acupuncture, massage therapy, physiotherapy, homeopathy and orthopaedic surgery.

The Earth Medicine support team consists of other professionals who ensure the smooth run-ning of the project. This includes project coordinators, office administrators, interpreters, drivers, technical engineers, graphic designers, accountants and editors.



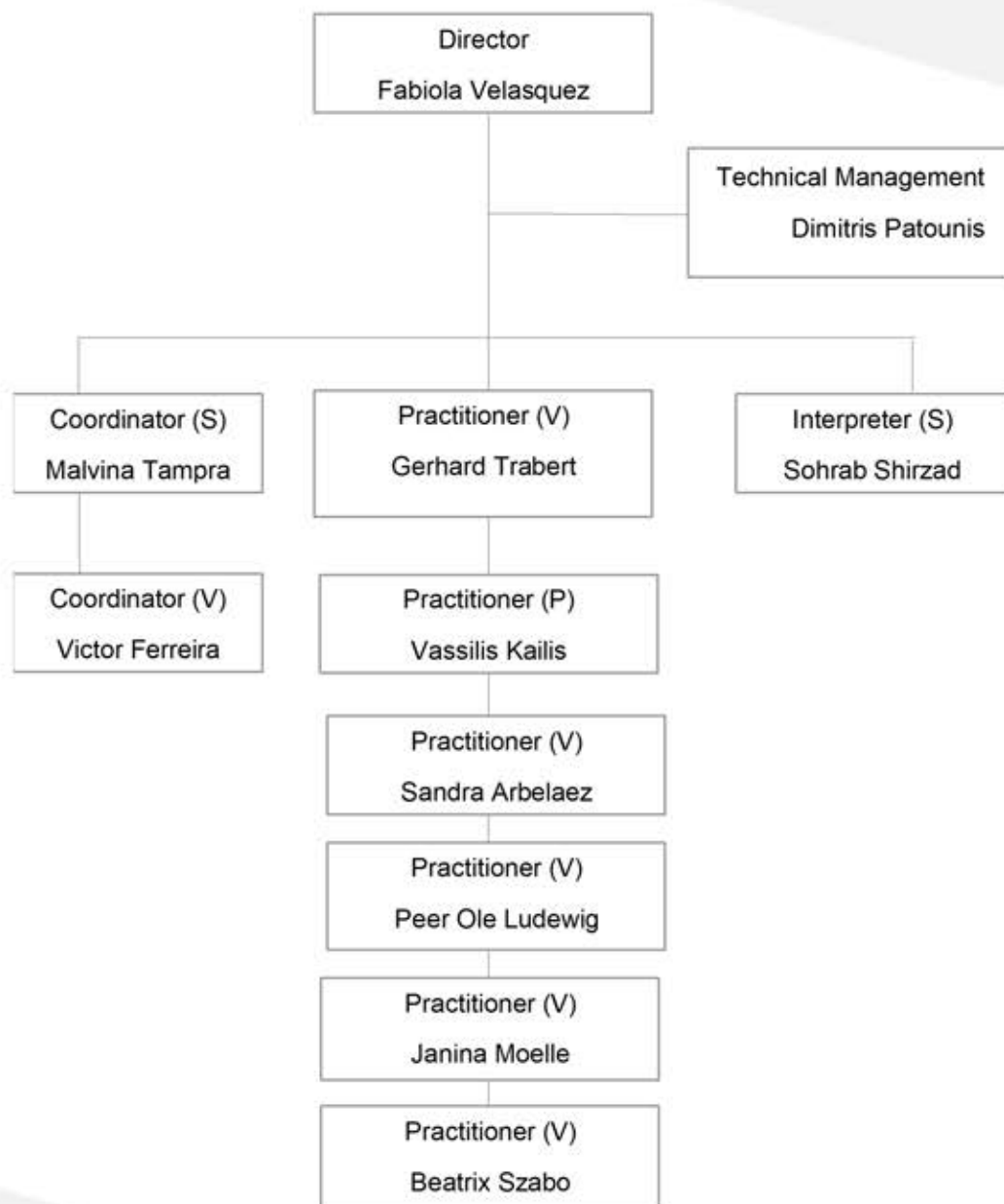
## What we do

- Provide a unique combination of therapeutic approaches through tailor-made and multi-disciplinary physical rehabilitation programmes for chronic health issues.
- Alleviate the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), by stabilising the body's most important physiological functions: sleep, digestion and detoxification.
- Combine therapies such as physiotherapy, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, therapeutic/remedial massage, homeopathy and orthopaedic treatment to improve the health of vulnerable asylum seekers.
- Engage qualified and experienced volunteers to provide appropriate therapies.

The organisation also has professional staff members permanently based in Lesvos. They oversee the daily running of Earth medicine's therapy spaces in both Mitilini town centre and the refugee camp.



## Organisation Chart



Key:  
 V: Volunteer  
 P: Provision of Services on a case-by-case basis  
 S: Staff (Fixed Term Contract)



## Core Values

We work hard to make therapeutic care accessible to everyone, regardless socioeconomic and legal status. We strongly believe every person should have the right to access dignified medical and social care, regardless of their nationality, religious beliefs or cultural background.



### DEDICATION

We remain dedicated to our initial purpose of relieving mainly physical, but also mental and emotional pain, of these vulnerable people.



### RESPECT

We deeply respect the diversity and uniqueness of cultures and of each person we meet individually.



### TEAM SPIRIT

We work as a team that combines the diverse perspectives and shared hopes of volunteers, professional therapists, refugees and locals.



### COMPASSION

We treat each patient with the utmost respect. Catering for their own individual needs creates a climate of trust, which is a crucial element of a successful therapeutic relationship.



## THE CORE TEAM



**FABIOLA  
VELASQUEZ**  
Chile

Earth Medicine  
Founder

Manager and  
Legal  
Representative

Fabiola Velasquez is a physical therapist and social activist with more than 15 years' experience in the field of social work. Born and raised in Puerto Mont, Chile, Fabiola's first contact with people in need came when she volunteered for a pre-university internship in Puerto Mont Hospital assisting people in the final stages of AIDS. This fundamental experience prompted her to further her studies and work in the field of social health, education and social activism.

Armed with a bachelor's degree (BA) in Education and Social Sciences and driven by a curiosity and passion to connect with the ancestral knowledge of her area, Fabiola engaged with the local indigenous community through studying traditional medicine. After her studies, she worked for several years in the Cultural Centre of Puerto Mont, developing integration programmes for people experiencing poverty and social vulnerability.

Fabiola studied remedial therapy, specialising in chronic injury rehabilitation in the UK then moved to the island of Lesbos in 2014, volunteering in the initial stages of the refugee crisis. In 2018, moved by the number of refugees with disabilities and chronic injuries who were forced to live in extremely difficult conditions, Fabiola dedicated her time as a full-time volunteer, to treat those who needed it most. This was the beginning of Earth Medicine Physical Rehabilitation. Since then, the project has gained momentum with the contribution of many local volunteers, including the refugees themselves.

In 2020, the project was officially registered as a non-profit organisation under Greek Law. Fabiola strongly believes that personal health and social health are closely interconnected.



**DIMITRIS  
PATOUNIS**  
Greece

Earth Medicine  
Founder

Technical Support

Dimitris Patounis is a professional control systems engineer with degrees in both software engineering and engineering design. He was born and raised on the island of Lesbos before he left to study and pursue a professional career abroad in the automotive industry, then renewable energy (wind energy). Upon returning to the island of Lesbos in 2014, he focused on sustainable transportation and ventured into the development and local production of electric cargo-bicycles.

Dimitris is passionate about the need for humanity to focus on sustainable de-growth, through social structures and technologies. He believes this will allow human civilization to transform, healing its connection with the environment and averting a climate catastrophe. In his opinion, Earth Medicine plays a very important humanitarian role by offering practical physical rehabilitation as well as psychological support for the most vulnerable among refugees.

He envisions that the organisation will expand its services to support most vulnerable local population with special needs as well, thus becoming a beacon of social integration. He is part of the Earth Medicine team as a volunteer and contributes to the technical aspects of the organisation (IT, data management and statistics, service of treatment equipment and any form of technical issues).





**GERHARD  
TRABERT**  
Germany

General  
Practitioner

Gerhard Trabert is a medical doctor in general and emergency settings, a professor of social medicine/psychiatry and an author. He was born in Mainz, Germany and studied social work at the Wiesbaden University of Applied Sciences from 1975 to 1979. Before and during his studies he was in the athletics team of the German junior and student national team. In 1983 he began studying human medicine, which he completed in 1989 at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. From the beginning of his medical practice, he completed numerous assignments abroad, including in India, Bangladesh and the USA.

During his trip through India, Dr Trabert got to know the 'Outreach Healthcare Concept' or 'Medical Street Work', mainly treating leprosy patients. The guiding principle followed of this concept is, 'if the patient does not come to the doctor, the doctor comes to the patient'. Inspired by this work and his experiences there, he applied this medical approach to the healthcare of homeless people.

In 1994 he founded the Mainz model, a medical care facility for homeless people. In 2013, Dr. Trabert set up the "Ambulance Without Borders" organisation in the city of Mainz. Homeless people and patients without insurance coverage are given medical treatment free of charge. Dr. Trabert has been part of the Earth Medicine team since 2018.



**SANDRA  
ARBELAEZ**  
Colombia/UK

Traditional  
Chinese Medicine  
Practitioner

Sandra is originally from Bogota-Colombia and has been living in the UK for over 25 years. She started her acupuncture practice in 2004, later doing post-graduate training in Chinese herbal medicine and in 2011 was awarded a MSc with merit in Oriental medicine. Sandra is always updating and advancing her knowledge. She is now enrolled in an advanced Chinese medicine training on Classical herbal medicine with Dr Suzanne Rubidoux.

Sandra believes that working with the most vulnerable within our communities will benefit society as a whole. She has volunteered her therapeutic skills in different organisations, working with immigrant women victims of domestic violence, palliative care, and people undergoing alcohol and drug rehabilitation. She has also volunteered at the Indian village of Chapparda, in the state of Gujarat, at a World Medicine's project aiming to bring acupuncture to those in most need around the world. Currently, Sandra works in private clinics in Bristol, and is the acupuncture practitioner at the Bristol Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre, in the UK.

Sandra has been part of the Earth Medicine team since 2018. She has helped out with our website content and fundraising, offers Chinese herbal medicine teleconsultations and treatments to our refugees as well as Chinese medicine advice to enhance our therapeutic results. In August 2021, Sandra spent over 3 weeks at Earth Medicine's clinic and offered treatments to many refugees experiencing pain, neurological problems, and PTSD. She hopes to be able to visit us regularly to offer her skills.





**SOHRAB  
SHIRZAD**  
Afghanistan

Driver and  
Farsi-Dari  
translator

Sohrab was born in Maidan-Wardak, he belongs to the ethnic group Hazaras, originally from the mountainous region of central Afghanistan. He speaks Hazaragi, Dari, Farsi and Pashtu. His father used to work distributing fruit and vegetables cultivated on their own family land. He also opened a supermarket in the village, where he traded various kinds of food products from the village to Kabul and vice versa.

At the age of 13, Sohrab's life changed dramatically when he faced the tragic death of both parents. Added to this was the unstable local economy which was a result of the political and ethnic conflicts that had gradually impoverished the central area in Afghanistan. Sohrab was forced to grow up quickly, as he took on the responsibility of looking after his youngest brother and sister and by the age of 15, Sohrab was already a skilled truck driver, distributing food supplies across various cities in Afghanistan. As a result of his remarkable strength and intelligence he was able to provide for his siblings. He developed a financially successful career as truck driver.

In 2012, he started working as truck driver for a major logistic company in Afghanistan where he was in charge of distributing food supplies to NATO army base operating in Afghanistan. During this time, the conflict between the government and the Taliban increased, increasing the danger of being attacked by the Taliban while on the road. Though he was involved with no political/ideological activism and only took the job to sustain his family, Sohrab became a threat to the Taliban due to his work as a truck driver and his ethnicity.



**MALVINA  
TAMPRA**  
Greece

Administrative  
Coordinator

Malvina is our administrative coordinator. She was born in Mytilene, Lesvos, Greece. She studied law at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She worked as a lawyer for 7 years in Mytilene, Lesvos. Apart from her law studies, since she was a kid has been making all kinds of crafts, such as jewels, accessories, bags. She's also a therapist, practicing full body therapeutical treatments for 18 years.

As a local, she has experienced refugee crisis during 2015. She was deeply touched from the tragic condition of all those people who arrived in the island (homeless, hungry, sick, vulnerable, families with small children e.t.c). So, she tried to help in any possible way. In 2019, she worked in Moria camp for 8 months in the Unaccompanied Minors Office, which was a great experience in all ways. Coming in contact with all those vulnerable people she understood their problems and needs and was motivated to engage more in the refugee issue. She started to work with Earth Medicine as a full-time employee since May 2021.



**Beatrix Szabo**  
Germany

Classical  
Homeopath

Bea is an alternative practitioner and has a MSc in Integrative Healthcare. Since 1995, she has been working in her own practice as a classical homeopath and psychotherapist with a focus on trauma therapy. She is a supervisor and runs her own training institute for classical homeopathy in Regensburg.

Bea worked in Macedonia and Bosnia after the war as a homeopath and lecturer. She writes articles about the refugee situation and is involved with Space-Eye (<https://space-eye.org/>) supporting Ukrainian refugees. Since August 2021, she has come regularly to Lesvos as a volunteer with Earth Medicine, together with other homeopaths.





Janina Moelle  
Germany

Bio-energetical  
Healer

Janina works for Earth Medicine as a bio-energetical healer. Based in Berlin, Germany, she first came to Lesvos in 2021 for a long-term stay. After beginning her professional life in the theatre and music industry, she decided in 2015 to follow a different path, searching for a deeper human connection.

After completing various trainings as a body psychotherapist, trauma counsellor, practitioner for psychotherapy and bioenergetic healer, she worked for three years for an organization supporting people with chronic mental diseases. There, she focused on complex trauma and dissociative disorders, mainly resulting from ritual abuse. Since 2018 she has also been supporting terminally ill patients within a hospice service. Since 2020, Janina has concentrated mainly on bioenergetic healing and expanding her private practice.



Victor F Lima  
Brazil

Graphic designer

Victor is our graphic and digital designer. He started volunteering with us in December 2019, creating our logo and visual identity. Since 2020, he has been taking care of the Earth Medicine website and all our visual communication. In addition, he has had his own design studio since 2012, where he collaborates with brands and organisations from all over the world.



Peer-Ole Ludewig  
Germany

Physiotherapist,  
Medical Student

Peer-Ole lives in Mainz, Germany and began working with humanitarian organizations from a young age. At age 13, he joined SEARA, a humanitarian organization based in Santarem, Brazil, which runs a kindergarten for malnourished kids. He raised funds to support the organization through various projects then at 16, he visited the project in Brazil. After graduating in 2012 and completing several internships in the field of medicine, Peer-Ole studied physical therapy from 2013-2016. From 2017-2019 he worked as a physical therapist in Wiesloch, Germany. Since the end 2019 he has studied human medicine at the Johannes-Gutenberg Universität Mainz.

In the spring of 2020, Peer-Ole had the opportunity to work in Lesvos with Earth Medicine, as a physical therapist. After returning to Germany, he continued supporting the organisation, interviewing applicants who want to join the programme. He believes that this project is one of a kind, and that it truly shows how a humanitarian organisation should engage with people in severe situations. At Earth Medicine, refugees do not only get physical help, but also support for their mental health and whole being.





Dr. KAILIS  
VASILIS  
Greece

Orthopaedic  
Surgeon

Dr. Vasilis Kailis, born and raised in Luxemburg, is an orthopaedic surgeon. He studied at the Medical School of Patras, and subsequently returned to Belgium to the Université Catholique de Louvain, in Brussels, where he became an orthopaedic Surgeon.

Dr. Kailis' love and passion for orthopaedic surgery with children led him back to the Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels, where he worked exclusively in paediatric orthopaedic surgery. He gained knowledge and experience in all aspects of paediatric orthopaedic surgery and traumatology, working with the simple, daily challenges in the development of a child as well as in serious cases, such as serious injuries and malignant tumours of the musculoskeletal system

He is a valuable partner of Earth Medicine, as he is always willing to support us with his specialised knowledge when we have patients with structural issues and injuries. Dr. Kailis has been part of the Earth Medicine team since January 2019.





# EARTH MEDICINE PROJECTS 2022

## • TREATMENTS

During 2022 we provided **1.711** treatments at our facilities in Mitilini and **865** treatments in the treatment container at Mavrovouni Camp, Lesvos.

We combined the following therapies: traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, therapeutic massage, cupping, physiotherapy, homeopathy and orthopaedic treatments.

## • FOOD VOUCHERS

During 2022 we distributed food vouchers to our most vulnerable patients. The most vulnerable are classed as single men or women without family support, single mothers, the elderly and people with severe physical disabilities.

## • NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT

From January until July 2022 we prepared **3.150** healthy and nutritious meals, which met the specific needs of individual patients. Breakfast and lunch were distributed from our kitchen facilities in Mitilini, as part of the multidisciplinary approach.

## • TRANSPORTATION

We purchased an accessible vehicle to be able to transport our patients with mobility issues from the Mavrovouni Camp for treatments at the Mitilini facilities or other locations for medical reasons.

## • INFRASTRUCTURES



• Mitilini Treatment Centre



• Mavrovouni Treatment container



• Equipment for the new volunteers' house





EARTH MEDICINE

## Our New TREATMENT CENTRE

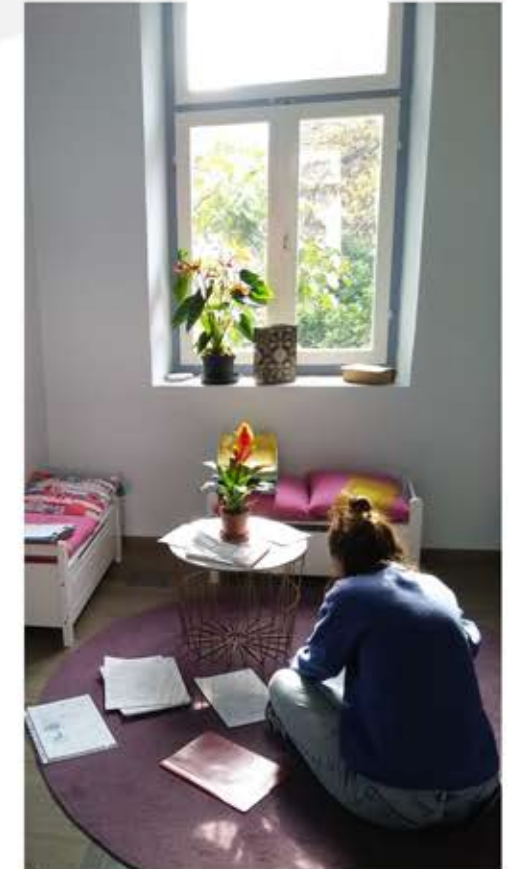


In the end of 2021, we moved our office further away from the centre of Mitilini to a large 2-storey building with an external garden and created the Mitilini Treatment Centre.

We can now expand the services we offer as the space is fully accessible, with a kitchen and treatment spaces on the ground floor. The top floor comprises an office space, an additional bathroom and two treatment rooms.

We would like to thank our volunteers and patients' relatives for the time and effort spent refurbishing, painting and organising these new facilities.

We continue to use the Earth Medicine vehicle to offer daily transportation of patients to/from Mavrovouni camp.







## Core Activities - Treatment

- Continue providing daily physical rehabilitation services to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in Lesvos.
- Cater for the increasing median age population of new refugee patients and a greater number of patients. Despite the reduction in overall numbers of refugees from 7000 to 2000 within the Mavrovouni camp this year, more patients are expected, with an increased awareness of the services available and opportunities to register.
- Expand the alternative medicine treatment offered (including acupuncture, homeopathy and physiotherapy) through increasing the number of volunteer therapists with these qualifications.
- Continue offering emergency medical diagnostics and treatment for patients with severe cases of trauma or mobility issues that cannot be treated in the local hospital.
- Continue transportation services between the Mavrovouni Camp and new facilities within the city. Currently an Earth Medicine vehicle covers in the range of 1000-1500 km per month (4 regular pick-up services for people with severe mobility issues, i.e. wheelchair users) for this service. Increasing fuel prices will impact the relative cost of this service.



## External Activities

- Support the construction of a formal refugee burial site on the island of Lesvos. Currently the majority of the victims of the refugee crisis that have lost their lives on or near the island are buried in unused land owned by the local municipality. Under the guidance and support of Armut-und-Gesundheit organisation (<https://www.armut-und-gesundheit.de/>) we are negotiating with the local authorities in order to transform this land into a dignified burial site for refugees. Intended actions for this process are as follows:
  - a) Identification of all burial grounds within the site, regardless of ethnicity and religion.
  - b) Clearing the surrounding area of shrubs and wild vegetation in a way that respects and protects the burial grounds.
  - c) Configuration of the space with flower planting, construction of paths (from natural materials such as stone and wood), fencing off the space and installation of memorial plaques.
- Continue to promote our work and project in Europe. For example, participated in a photo exhibition, ran by our friend and volunteer Alea Horst in Berlin, in December 2021.
- Update our website with the required Greek version, following the legal requirements for the organisation to operate under Greek law.
- Expand services to offer treatments to local citizens without health insurance or with only limited financial resources for private healthcare.
- Promote cooperation between local and international healthcare professionals who embrace our values of deep human connection, social integration and community development.



## Our Next Steps 2023

Today, our efforts are not only focused on alleviating asylum seekers' injuries but also to support the local community of Mitilini and its surrounding area. It is our way of planting the seeds of strength for communities. Through supporting the most vulnerable among our community, we can contribute to an integration process that embraces our cultural differences.

This document summarises Earth Medicine's planned activities for the period between January 2023 and January 2024. Earth Medicine, in its current form as a fully registered NGO within the Greek Law, started operating on 20th November 2020. It provides physical rehabilitation treatments and healthcare therapies for refugees currently living in Mavrovouni refugee camp in Lesvos, Greece.



## Collective compassion leads to Great Support







## CALENDAR 2022

### JANUARY - MARCH

After moving into our new treatment centre in November 2021, the first quarter of 2022 was spent finalising these premises, to create a pleasant environment for our patients, employees and volunteers alike. This space enables us to give our patients the treatment they need with the appropriate equipment, environment and dignity they deserve.

January 2022 also saw the opening of a kitchen service at our Mitilini treatment centre and providing an essential component in our holistic approach. This allows us to provide nutrition that complements our treatments to the most vulnerable patients (i.e. single men or women without family support, single mothers, the elderly and people with severe physical disabilities). In 2022 we provided between 400-450 meals and started to provide monthly food vouchers.



### APRIL – JUNE

During these months many different therapists joined our team as volunteers, providing treatments to all our patients. They came mainly from European countries donating their time and skills as acupuncturists, homeopaths and physiotherapists. In April we started work in our garden and produce our own organic vegetables.

By the end of April, we finally became officially registered (Reg. Num. ID 2809) at the "Register of Greek and Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)" with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. As a result, we received permission to place a container inside the camp, so we could start to provide treatment onsite, without the need for transport. In June we organised a party for the children of all our patients in our beautiful garden, where children played creative games, danced and enjoyed the delicious food that our cook had prepared for them.







## CALENDAR 2022

### JULY - SEPTEMBER

In July an agreement was signed between Earth Medicine, ASF-France Auvergne and LCC Foundation to financially support the ASF France & Earth Medicine's Acupuncture project in Lesvos. Since the acupuncture project began, patients have always responded positively to acupuncture treatment especially for pain relief and PTSD symptoms. Therefore it is crucial for our organisation to have at least 2 acupuncturists onsite every month, to maintain the continuity of treatment for our patients.

We are blessed to be on an island rich in natural products that can be used for therapeutic purposes. Knowing this, in July we prepared our own St John's Wort oil, using local extra virgin olive oil and local herbs that grow in the mountainous areas surrounding Mitilini.



We have managed to create 200 small bottles of St John's Wort and 150 bottles of chamomile oil, all of which will be given to our patients. During August we started to carry out all the necessary landscaping work (creating a ramp for easy access etc.) and finally, by the end of the month we managed to equip the treatment container in time for treatments to start in September.



### OCTOBER - DECEMBER

During these months we gave all our treatments inside the Mavrovouni camp in our fully equipped container. Since summer, there had been a dramatic increase in the number of refugee coming into Lesvos. As a result, we had many new patients, with various injuries and/or chronic pains. Our daily contact in the camp with all these vulnerable people made us even more determined to alleviate their physical and, if possible, mental pain.







## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Beyond the treatment rooms in Mitilini Treatment Centre and Mavrovouni Treatment Container, we assist those in need to access healthcare in these ways:



### Medical Treatments

Our patients often require medical treatments and diagnoses, such as MRI scans, X-rays, orthopaedic doctor assessments and dental services.



### Prosthetics and Mobility Aids

Because many of our refugee patients have amputated limbs, due to bombings or terrorist attacks in their homelands, they often need prosthetic devices or mobility aids. We provide these where possible and support their journey to independence.



### Supporting Locals

We extended our services to members of the local community who have difficulties accessing healthcare services due to financial issues.



### Nutrition

We have set up a programme for cooking and providing food for the most vulnerable of our patients at the Mitilini treatment centre.



### Language Skills

Our administrator, Malvina Tampira, has developed a programme to enhance refugee translators' english language skills according to a specific terminology.



### Accommodation

We expanded the support for our overseas volunteers and now provide fully equipped accommodation. We also provided emergency accommodation for extremely vulnerable refugee patients.



# Case Studies

Here is a collection of individual cases to show how effective the combination of therapies and continuity of treatment can be for acute and chronic injuries.

## Abdilsalam Nour



Abdilsalam, a 22-year-old man from Somalia, arrived in Lesvos in 2021. He fled Somalia after his father and brother were assassinated by paramilitary forces. He is married and owns land in his country, as well as a family business, but he was forced to escape to avoid getting killed. Abdilsalam first came to Earth Medicine's facilities in Mitilini in February 2022. He had contracted tuberculosis (TB) in the previous year, after which he developed pleural effusion and polyneuropathy. He had a complete loss of sensation in his lower body which had rendered him unable to walk or even stand. He was also extremely thin, unable to eat due to severe abdominal pain and still taking strong antibiotics to treat his TB.

In addition to the inability to eat and digest, Abdilsalam was also unable to take deep breaths. He had chest pain and constriction as a result of the damage caused by TB on his right lung. Initially his treatment at Earth Medicine focused on helping his body to heal by supporting the function of his lungs and digestive system. We provided food made especially for him to restore his ability to eat and digest, so that his body could start to build the strength necessary for his recovery. We also used massage and gentle manipulation on his upper body as well as breathing techniques for 1-2 hours every day. After a few weeks, he felt more able to breathe, his digestion improved, and he started to gain strength. We then started to practise the simple motion of standing from a sitting position to recondition his lower limbs and spine. Initially this was very difficult as his muscles were atrophied and he felt pain and fatigue after the sessions.

By March 2022, Abdilsalam's lower limbs had gradually built up enough for him to be able to stand more easily, and he started using a rollator walker. At this stage of his treatment, he was still experiencing severe pain at the ankle joints and his muscles were still weak. After a month, his muscles were stronger and he was experiencing significantly less pain in the ankles. Throughout this time, Abdilsalam received treatments every single day and different practitioners spent up to three hours each day exclusively working with him. The therapies he received included dietary therapy, remedial massage, physiotherapy, and acupuncture.

He made steady progress and by the end of June 2022, he was able to stand and walk very slowly with mobility aids, although he was unable to lift his feet at all. At this stage, daily scalp and body acupuncture treatments were introduced followed by physiotherapy to strengthen his muscle control. He then made very fast progress and after only a week, he was able to lift his knees, bend his ankles and lift his feet off the ground to manage a few careful steps without aid. After another week of these treatments, he was walking, using a bicycle as transport and even playing a little basketball without needing any support at all.

The entire rehabilitation programme we offered Abdilsalam between February and November 2022, was defined by his specific needs and was adapted whenever there was a change in his condition. We gave him everything we could to help his recovery and he also worked hard to fully regain his mobility. As a result, he is now fully mobile and we feel immense satisfaction from contributing to remarkable recovery journey.







## Khalid Alafaat

Khalid Alafaat (31) lived with his family in Deir ez-Zor in Syria. A bomb fell on his house during the Syrian war. Khalid suffered a brain injury that paralysed both his legs and his right arm. The situation remained life-threatening for him and his family, so he decided to flee together with his wife Nashmia and daughter Khadeja.

Their son Radi was born in Lesvos. Khalid and his family were transferred to Mavrovouni camp in Lesvos, where they had been stuck for almost two years when we met. For Khalid, this camp was totally inaccessible. It was impossible for him to move independently on the rocky ground, plus there were not accessible toilets or showers. Fortunately, on 6th July 2021 Khalid Alafaat's family was granted a visa D for humanitarian reasons in Belgium. Earth Medicine provided all the required support to ensure visas for the whole family were secured, the family trip to the Belgian embassy in Athens was supported and plane tickets were purchased.

On 15th of December 2021 Khalid Alafaat and his family finally travelled to Belgium, Herent. Fabiola Velasquez accompanied them, to assist them with all the travel bureaucracy and to ensure their trip went smoothly. It was a huge step for Khalid and his family; they were extremely happy and relieved that the camp experience in Lesvos was over. Knowing that Khalid, his wife and their children will now have the opportunity to access education and live in a peaceful environment is our biggest reward and relief.



## Anisa Hassan

Anisa is from Somalia. She has severe burns injury affecting both arms, neck and face. Earth Medicine provided an MRI examination then in April 2022, Marion Bohm, a homeopathy therapist volunteering at Earth Medicine contacted an organisation in Germany who specialised in reconstructive surgery. After presenting the case to Placet (<https://www.placet-berlin.de>) they accepted Anisa's case and offered to cover the total cost of the reconstructive surgery including her accommodation in Berlin.



# VOLUNTEERING AT EARTH MEDICINE

The Earth Medicine team is composed of different therapists and healthcare workers, specialising in acupuncture, massage therapy, medicinal herbs, physiotherapy and homeopathy. A local orthopaedic doctor also volunteers his services. All of them give the best of their knowledge to improve the health of hundreds of vulnerable asylum seekers who have experienced trauma at physical, mental and emotional levels.

We are inviting practitioners of the following disciplines to offer their skills at our centre:



- **Acupuncture**  
(including body, ear and scalp acupuncture)



- **Bodywork:**  
remedial massage  
therapy and reflexology



- **Physiotherapy**



- **Homeopathy**



## Volunteer Requirements

Although we would love to accept every volunteer who applies, we have learned that certain gaps either professional expertise or life experience can be detrimental to both you and the project, so we have a careful selection process.

The people we are helping at Mavrovouni camp on Lesbos have experienced extreme situations and often display a complex combination of emotional and physical injuries. This means we require volunteers who are able to handle the complexity of this type of work, both as experienced professionals and as grounded human beings.

Volunteer placements are usually a minimum of one month (30 days). This is sometimes negotiable, depending on the area of expertise and project requirements.

The following is required from all our volunteers:



- **Experience**  
at least 2-5 years, depending on discipline, professional development and client base history.



- **Competencies**  
The ability to be compassionate, enthusiastic, dynamic, adaptable, confident and a good listener



- **Teamwork**  
The ability to work with interpreters and practitioners of other disciplines in an environment with limited resources.



- **Connection**  
The ability to connect with all kinds of people to provide treatments with kindness, sensitivity and warmth.



- **Finance**  
Able to cover the cost of return travel from home country to Lesbos and general living costs whilst on the island.





## The Volunteer Role

All practitioners are asked to provide the following:

- Deliver a detailed consultation and examination to determine the specific needs of each person to deliver a tailor-made treatment.
- Provide treatments according to the unique needs of each person and identify professional limitations where necessary.
- Refer patients to other practitioners or the orthopaedic doctor where necessary.
- Keep accurate records of the patients' details, medical history, condition and treatment programme.
- Contribute via additional treatments/techniques.
- Give advice to patients to enhance their recovery only if the suggestion comes from previous experience where has proved to be appropriate and effective.



## Physiotherapists



In addition to the duties for all practitioners:

- Evaluate patients' strength, flexibility, balance, coordination, posture and respiratory rate.
- Provide proficient knowledge for chronic injury recovery.
- Explain basic information to the interpreters, who work permanently in the centre and need basic training in order to facilitate the process through to the next physiotherapist. This ensures the continuity of rehabilitation treatments for patients.
- Assist and take patients to the orthopaedic doctor in Mitilini or take them to the appropriate centre when an X-Ray or MRI examination is required.



## Bodywork therapists



In addition to the duties for all practitioners:

- Use manipulation techniques relevant to therapy expertise to treat musculoskeletal disorders, including deep tissue manipulation and stretching, as appropriate.
- Use techniques necessary to alleviate pain, assist healing, improve circulation, relieve stress, increase relaxation and promote general wellness.
- Be flexible, sensitive and considerate when treating patients, as their cultural differences, types of injury and traumatic experiences may require a different approach.



## Acupuncture practitioners



In addition to the duties for all practitioners:

- Proficiency in Chinese medicine diagnosis to provide treatment addressing both the symptoms and their root cause.
- Knowledge of different techniques including ear acupuncture with the use of ear seeds, moxibustion, and/or cupping as appropriate.
- An understanding of how to approach people who may be frightened of needles and may need the use of other techniques at the beginning of treatment.
- Knowledge of Chinese medicine treatment approaches for chronic pain and emotional trauma.





## Volunteers' Experience



**Maria Freixieiro**  
A physiotherapist  
from Portugal

To Earth Medicine,

I want to thank you for these wonderful months that I spent here. Every day that I worked did not feel like it. This project has already changed many lives and mine is one of them. Coming here gave me confidence and helped me to clarify my way.

As a physiotherapist this experience gave me a lot of new

knowledge, mostly because I had the opportunity to work together with acupuncturists and homeopaths. In my country it is not very common to work together with these professionals and it's amazing how these areas can complement each other with the collective purpose of giving the best treatment possible to the patient. My work was much easier and I could see results much faster when I worked together with an acupuncturist.

For me this was a big challenge, to go abroad alone, working in a context that I did not know. It turned out to be a great experience where I had the opportunity to meet wonderful people that always cared about me and worked with me as a family. I could not be happier.

Thank for all your support and trust in me.  
I wish you all the best!





## Ulrike Straten

### A physiotherapist from Germany

My name is Ulrike Straten and I am a 62-year-old physiotherapist from Germany. I have been working in this profession for more than 30 years. In September and October 2022, I was able to spend 4 weeks working as a volunteer with Earth Medicine in Mitilini, Lesvos. The aim of Earth Medicine is to bring rehabilitation care to people, who are trying to find asylum in Europe and are waiting for the decision in Mavrovouni camp, sometimes for months and for years.

During these four weeks I worked at the treatment centre in Mitilini, as well as directly inside the refugee camp. I worked with more than twenty male and female patients between 20 and 70 years old. Most of them I could see several times a week and often they also had an appointment with one of the other therapists at Earth Medicine, for example an acupuncturist or homeopath.

All of these patients complained about pain and often struggled with mobility; they were all trying to find a way to improve their problems. The reasons for their problems were numerous; all of them experienced many traumatic situations. I want to describe some examples where I believe that we, the therapists, were able to help these people in quite a straightforward way. I focus on the physiotherapy, although the combination of different therapies, as I believe, makes treatments even more effective and helpful.

Bilkha, a 28-year-old woman from Afghanistan had very strong headaches, back pain, pronounced scoliosis since childhood and was always feeling cold. After one week of acupuncture and physiotherapy she felt much better. She learnt exercises for mobilising and strengthening her body that she could do at home. She also learnt a set of breathing-exercises, that could help her to straighten her body and relax. She continued to come for four weeks, so that this programme became part of her daily routine.

Leila, a 52-year-old woman from Afghanistan came with chronic left knee pain, sciatica problems and concerns with her right leg. She also presented with acute shoulder problems after being beaten at home some months before. After examination of the shoulder, a special mobilisation of the acromioclavicular joint was carried out and after some days, in combination with exercises she was doing at home, her pain had almost completely gone. After that, the focus could move to the other, more chronic health problems.

Rohalla, a 28-year-old man from Afghanistan had injured his knee two months prior to arrival while playing basketball. The pain was persisting and made him limp from time to time. He gained fast relief through acupuncture treatments combined with physio treatments, such as taping, mobilisation, stretching and strengthening. Using a crutch when required also helped his knee to recover. After 3 years in the camp, he left with his family for Germany during the treatment process and left his crutch at the container ...

Ahmad, a 35-year-old man from Afghanistan came with a chronic knee problem he'd had for over one year. He'd had to stop his medical treatment the previous year when the family had to leave their home. Taping his knee and teaching him the how to use his legs in a more effective way showed him a way out of the pain.

All of the patients I met were very grateful to receive professional treatment and most of them showed great compliance. I am very grateful to have met each one of these brave people and to have been part of a fantastic and passionate team. It would be great to repeat this experience.





## Sandra Arbelaez

An acupuncturist  
from Colombia\UK

I have worked as a therapist with Earth Medicine since 2021 and have visited four times. The vast majority of people who approach Earth Medicine are experiencing many types of pain. This can be from past injuries suffered during the conflicts in their home country, acute and chronic pain from wear and tear either caused or exacerbated by the difficult journeys to reach Europe, rheumatoid arthritis, and neuropathic pain.

Other common painful conditions are headaches related to stress, anxiety and malnutrition, abdominal pain, and menstrual pain.

The offer of daily treatments, the use of different techniques and when [ the combination of different therapies such as acupuncture, physiotherapy and massage has repeatedly proven very effective here. During my four visits, even the most severe and stubborn of pains has receded by the end of the second week of treatment, despite the fact that living conditions do not adequately support patients' physical and mental health.

Issues with mental health are also extremely common. Although many of the people, particularly males, do not approach Earth Medicine primarily for this reason, it often becomes clear mental health symptoms (i.e. night terrors) are contributors to their physical symptoms.

Some of these symptoms can be associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and we see them get exacerbated by any stressors such as asylum interviews, asylum rejections, bad news about the family or country of origin, etc.

Acupuncture has been seen to help with these symptoms. The sense of calm induced by the regulatory effects of treatment on the nervous system, is also encouraged by a feeling of trust and safety in the space where we offer treatment. This is another aspect that is important at Earth Medicine. The community feeling that is created within its spaces encourage people to relax and trust which in turn enhances the effects of the treatments offered.

### Case Study 1

Many people also experience digestive issues. Most of the people I have treated at Earth Medicine had at least one of these symptoms: acid reflux, bloating, constipation, low to no appetite, mild to severe abdominal pain. It is considered that unless the dysfunction of the digestive system is corrected, treating other symptoms effectively will be more difficult. The most severe case I saw, was a young Syrian man in his early twenties who had completely lost the ability to eat and digest. He was freezing cold and would only want to lie down and sleep with a blanket over his head all the time. He had constant and severe abdominal pain, which would be excruciating if he ate. He was extremely thin and extremely weak. We could all see that he wouldn't be able to go on much longer in this way. He received daily treatments where I used very few acupuncture needles and strong moxibustion on his abdomen. Within a week, he began to be able to eat a little. On the second week, he started to sit up and interact with people. He was fed special foods at Earth Medicine and was put on the path of recovery thanks to our combined efforts.

### Case Study 2

One of my main interests as a practitioner is the treatment of neurological symptoms and I have worked at a local therapy centre for people with Multiple Sclerosis and other neurological conditions for many years. While in Lesvos, I have seen a few very severe cases which have surprised me because they have been very young people in their early twenties who have developed neurological symptoms rooted in nerve damage from severe malnutrition or from different types of toxicity, and one who had a stroke most likely resulting from extreme stressful or traumatic situations. These and other neurological cases, have responded extremely well to a combination of scalp (Jiao style) and TCM acupuncture immediately followed by physiotherapy done while the scalp acupuncture needles are still threaded into the scalp.



This is a technique commonly used in the neurological wards of integrative medicine hospitals in China. When we have done this in Lesvos, the physiotherapists have remarked on the great difference it makes to combine our disciplines in this way.

One example was a young Somali man in his early 20s who had lost all sensation on his lower limbs and become unable to move his feet and legs following the diagnosis and treatment of Tuberculosis. He was also extremely thin and unable to eat due to abdominal pain and poor absorption. When I visited Lesvos in July this year, he had been coming for several months and had undergone an extensive programme of recovery which started with strengthening his body with the right nutrition. When I first saw him, he was already digesting well and able to stand from sitting. He was now focused on recovering his ability to walk working for several hours a day with a physiotherapist. He received massage and stretching from the physiotherapist and practised his standing as well as attempting to give steps with a rollator walker but without being able to lift his feet off the ground.

Within one week of treatments combining TCM acupuncture and moxibustion and scalp acupuncture, followed by physiotherapy with the scalp needles still on, he was able to lift his feet off the ground without help. After three weeks of treatment, he was walking without aids and playing with a ball without losing his balance able to give quick steps without any difficulty. His recovery was not complete yet, but we could all see how rapidly his movement improved when we combined these therapies on a daily basis.



# EARTH MEDICINE

PHYSICAL REHABILITATION





# ASYLUM SEEKERS VOLUNTEERS

We are very grateful to all those asylum seekers who have offered their services voluntarily to Earth Medicine by cooking, gardening, building, cleaning and interpreting.



## The Value of Community



• Safe Environment



• Shared Activities



• Positivity



• Respect



• Inclusive Space

Creating a safe environment where people feel comfortable and confident is crucial to Earth Medicine's work. It is extraordinary to see how positivity grows and people respond to an inclusive environment where different backgrounds are all welcome and people fully express themselves according to their own cultural needs.

One of the activities that has helped us to create a safe space has been the daily routine of cooking and sharing food together. This is not possible at Mavrovouni camp where all food is pre-determined and delivered in plastic containers to the refugee community. Sharing meals is a great way to gather people together, so we can share delicious recipes from different countries and learn from each other. It is a simple way to honour the culture, knowledge and memories that people carry from the homelands. We seize every opportunity to celebrate life - it's one of the most effective ways of healing.



# Statistical Data 2022



## Financial Report

### Statistical Data of Money Distribuion for the Year of 2022



• FOOD SUPPLIES	12,42%
• TRANSPORTATION	6,42%
• ACCOMODATION	13,44%
• MEDICAL SUPPLIES	20,00%
• OFFICE SUPPLIES	
- Stationery	0,20%
- Services	21,25%
• Equipment-Infrastructure	26,28%

**Donations**  
136.851 €

**Money Distribution**  
118.078 €

**Reserve Fund**  
18.773 €



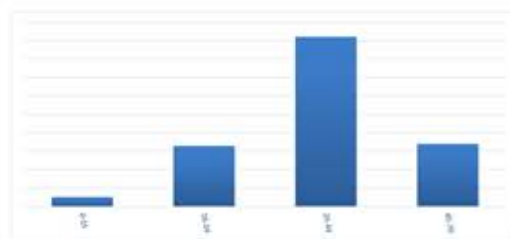


# Activity Report

EARTH MEDICINE'S unique combination of therapeutic approaches gives access to physical rehabilitation for those who are most vulnerable among asylum seekers and in the local society.

Earth Medicine's team of therapist focus their effort to provide tailor-made, multi-disciplinary physical rehabilitation programs to improve chronic injuries, at the same time on alleviating the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),-by stabilising the body's important physiological functions: sleeping, digestion and detoxification.

We combine therapies such as: physiotherapy, traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, therapeutic massage, homeopathy, and orthopedic medical examinations to improve the health of vulnerable asylum seekers with physical impediments.



Age Group		Age	Patients
Male	81	0-15	5
Female	83	16-24	33
Total	164	25-44	92
		45-70	34

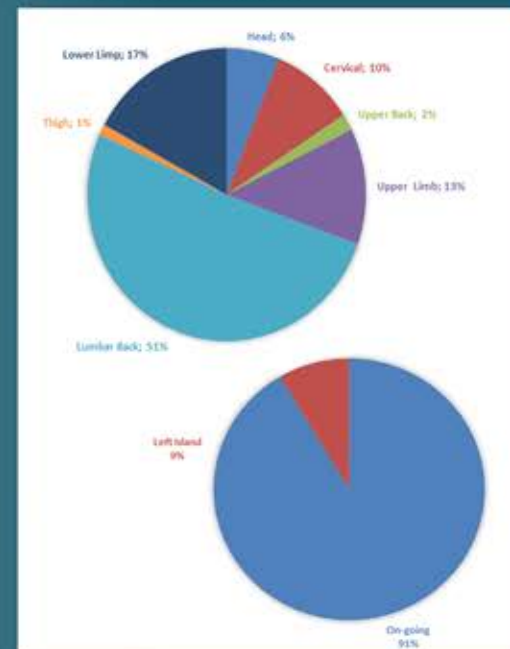
## Injury type

The refugee population commonly presents with chronic physical injuries as well as the psychological and emotional consequences of traumatic experiences lived both before leaving their countries and during their journeys to safety. Most common injuries and chronic disease are: elbow fracture, herniated disc, lower limb fractures, knee and wrist injuries, joint deformation due to arthritis, shoulder injury, sciatica, flatfoot and hip misalignment.

Each person receives at least 1 hour of treatment and we focus a lot on the patient-therapist relationship. We want them to feel confident and safe in a warm environment.

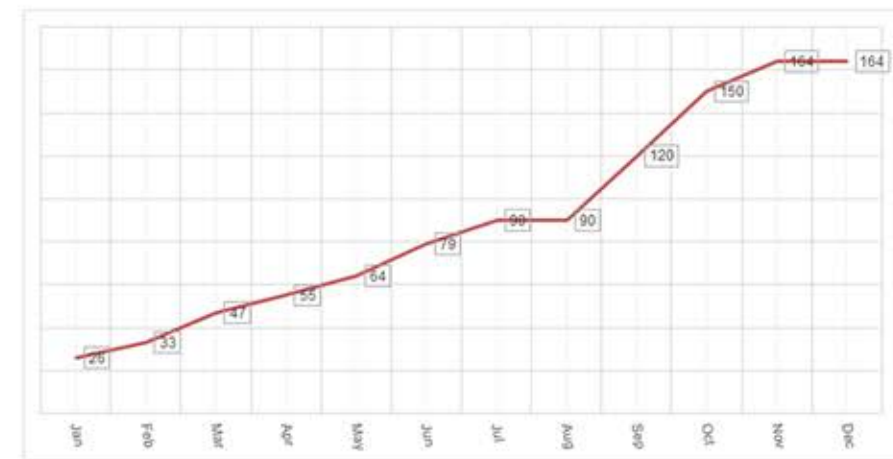
## Treatment status

Average treatment hours per person, per week 3.6

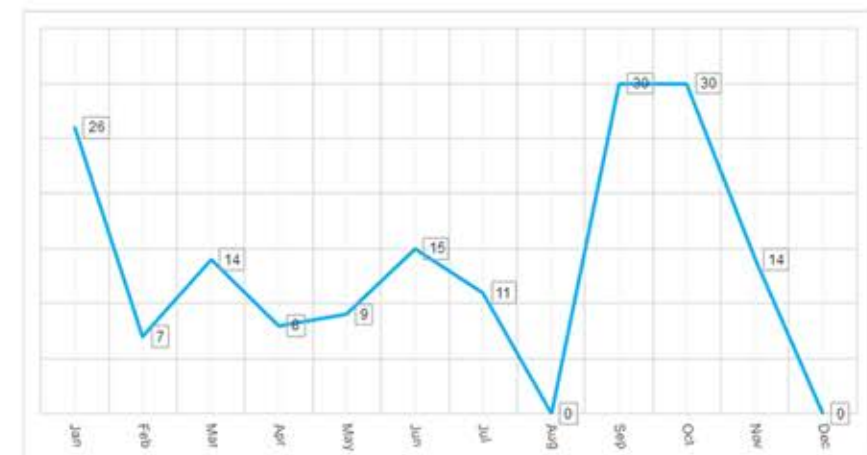


During 2022 Earth Medicine consolidated an important partnership with ASF France Auvergne, this allows us to have regularly Acupuncturist practitioner coming to Lesvos working closely with physiotherapist and homeopaths. Thanks to this we are able to expand our therapeutic work to those patients that require long term treatment due to their permanent physical disabilities.

Another important achievement during 2022 was the installation of one container "practice" inside the camp. This allow us to perform a faster first consultation assessment and also to give few treatment to those most vulnerable patient, while the rest of them continue assisting to our practice in Mitilini.



Total patients



New patients per month



## THANK YOU!

We would like to highlight the enormous support given to us by our sponsors. Times have been difficult in the past few years, but your help have been a true lifesaver. Every time we saw a patient recover, through managing to walk again or relief from constant pain, hope has been renewed. Our work would not have been possible without your constant support.

Thank you for trusting Earth Medicine and the work we do.

*We believe love has no borders*

**WHF**



**WIR MACHEN MIT!**

**#LeaveNoOneBehind**



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**CHOOSE  
LOVE**

