

NON-PROFIT
ORGANISATION

ANNUAL REPORT

EARTH MEDICINE

PHYSICAL
REHABILITATION

www.theearthmedicine.com



EARTH MEDICINE

2023

PAPADIAMANTI 23
MITILINI - LESVOS
GREECE



EARTH MEDICINE

Earth Medicine emerged as a humanitarian organisation from a clear need for physical rehabilitation treatments among the asylum seekers living in Lesvos, Greece.

As the years have passed, we have also seen the need to contribute to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the local community. We are aware that social integration is a difficult process which can be confusing when there is a mutual lack of understanding of the each other's language, religion, social codes, and customs. For this reason, we make an effort to act as a bridge between the different cultures whenever there is an opportunity to do so. We believe that it is important to approach this issue with a humble and open heart so that all involved find new ways of understanding themselves and the cultures present in their environment until, eventually, all those perceived differences will become the source of a richer society.



EARTH MEDICINE

In 2023, we were able to expand our presence inside the refugee camp from one to three fully-equipped container clinics. In addition, this year we launched the project Memorial to Humanity with the aim to convert a field where asylum seekers who have died in Lesvos and its nearby waters have been buried since 2015 into a proper burial ground where they can be laid to rest with the dignity and respect that every human being deserves. We feel it is our duty to do this and to honour the memory of all those who have so tragically lost their lives while seeking refuge. This project has also given us a great opportunity to involve many local professionals and support local businesses thus strengthening our relationship with the local community.

As part of our intention to extend our positive impact to include this local community, this year we also provided assistance to paraplegic and quadriplegic local residents and their families, offering them rehabilitation aids and medical supplies when needed.

We are thankful for the brilliant work done by the Earth Medicine team composed by our two contracted staff who help with the office duties and daily running of the project and our volunteer therapists, doctors, asylum seekers, and local medical professionals. We thank them all for giving their best to help those in needs.

Our heart-felt gratitude to all our donors. Without your support our work would not be possible.

Best wishes,
Fabiola Velasquez
Founder / Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fabiola Velasquez', is positioned below the typed name.





Our Core ACTIVITIES

- Continue providing daily physical rehabilitation services to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in Lesvos.
- Cater for the families' median-age population of new refugee patients and a greater number of patients.
- Expand the complementary treatment offered (including TCM/acupuncture, homeopathy and physiotherapy) through increasing the number of volunteer therapists with these qualifications.
- Continue offering complementary therapies for patients with severe cases of mobility issues.





Core **VALUES**

We work hard to make therapeutic care accessible to patients because 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.



RESPECT



TEAM SPIRIT



DEDICATION



COMPASSION

EARTH MEDICINE



The Value of **COMMUNITY**

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.

VOLUNTEERING AT EARTH MEDICINE

The Earth Medicine team is composed of different therapists and healthcare workers, specialising in TCM/ acupuncture, remedial massage therapy, physiotherapy and homeopathy. A local orthopaedic doctor supports us by offering his medical diagnosis whenever needed. 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.



TCM/Acupuncture

(including body, ear and scalp acupuncture)



Bodywork:

remedial massage
therapy



Physiotherapy



Homeopathy

EARTH MEDICINE

Prosthetics
and Mobility
Aids



Spending
time together



Supporting
Locals



Complementary
therapeutic
treatments



Intercultural
interactions



CASE STUDY Dhayow

Ms Dhayow is a 42 years old woman from Somalia. She arrived in Lesvos in January 2020 and lived in Moria camp until it was destroyed by a fire. She lived by herself as she had no relatives with her.



Current health condition

According to a medical examination from May 2021 by orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Vasilis Kailis, Ms Dhayow presents left lower limb atrophy/dysfunction and muscle weakness with a left limb length discrepancy (LLD) of about 3 cm. According to her own statements, this condition resulted from untreated poliomyelitis she contracted during childhood. X-ray images show a great difference in bone density of the left (L) and right (R) sides of her lower body (femur, pelvis, tibia, fibula, knee joint). The weakness and atrophy present on the left lower limb has been made worse by the lack of a suitable orthotic device that would support the joints and allow Ms Dhayow to use the leg.

Challenges inside the camp

It is well known that the current camp in Lesvos is highly unsuitable for those with mobility issues due to the unsurfaced paths and the uneven terrain. Although Ms Dhayow is able to move inside her own container helped by crutches, the uneven terrain of the camp makes it very difficult for her to get around as her crutches easily slip off, putting her in danger of falling over and injuring herself. For this reason, she avoids going to the communal toilets and showers, to the point of not drinking fluids in order to prevent needing to urinate. She is also unable to get enough food supplies as this implies walking even further with her crutches and risking having an accident. This has resulted in very poor nutrition which will be detrimental to her health in the long term.

Earth Medicine provided Orthotic devices to improve her mobility

According to the examination by the orthopaedic doctor, the main joints on Ms Dhayow's left lower limb are still functional. His assessment is that this gives us an opportunity to increase her mobility by providing a custom-made kafo orthotic device that includes the hip, knee and ankle joints. This device would allow her to start using the left leg and strengthen its muscles, thus avoiding further joint and muscle atrophy in the future.

On May 2023, Earth Medicine was able to provide the custom made devices needed. Ms Dhayow travelled to Athens accompanied by a physiotherapist from E.M. The manufacture of Ms Dhayow's orthotic devices was a success and the patient is able to walk much better, of course the current terrain inside the camp is not the best place to walk using an orthotic device. We hope the patient could be transferred to a much suitable living facility.

CASE STUDY

Seyed

Seyed is six years old and has been attending physical rehabilitation at Earth Medicine facilities since 18/11/2022 until June 2023.



Medical examination

As part of the complementary treatment we were able to offer: Orthopedic medical examination by Dr. Kailis Vasilis, specialised in child musculoskeletal conditions. According to Dr. Kailis, Seyed suffers from a neuromuscular syndrome affecting his upper and lower limbs. Due to this condition the child is unable to walk properly, losing stability as lacks of the muscles development that are crucial for walking safety without damaging the joints.

Devices provided

On Monday 27 March 2023, Earth Medicine provided the lower limbs (both legs) Orthotics braces custom made according to Seyed anatomical needs. We recommended the child continues attending physical rehabilitation for 2-3 weeks in order to learn to walk properly with the new devices. This is an enormous support not only to improve his ability to walk but also to avoid further joints and connective tissue deformities in the future.



HOURI ALAVI


Acupuncturist

Staying connected is a biological imperative. Our resilience in facing life's challenges is the product of how we connect to others, and how safe we feel. The cultivation of these connections was at the forefront of my mind when I asked to join Earth Medicine as a volunteer in October 2022 and again in 2023.



I have been practicing acupuncture for 20 years, and alongside that, I used to be a teacher, working with children and their families who had newly-arrived in the UK (some via Lesvos). I have always enjoyed using Farsi, my mother tongue, especially to support families integrate in their new surroundings in relation to the education system, and I felt I could transfer many of those skills to working with migrants in other situations.

During my first trip to Lesvos, my experienced colleague, Sarah Budd-Bell, mentored and guided me through the routines and practices of working at the camp, as well as in the city clinic. I felt well-integrated in the team of two homeopaths, a physiotherapist, interpreters and all the Earth Medicine staff and volunteers. Their rolling program of support ensures positive outcomes to our interventions.



This year, what I witnessed on arrival at camp on the first day was nothing short of mind-blowing. Since August 2023, the camp was receiving 2-3 times more migrants daily, as compared to the previous year, surpassing the camp's capacity several times over. As such, more accommodation containers, tents, and other services such as food outlets were being constructed to meet the increasing volumes. The flow of people was unending, and the queues forming getting longer and longer.

It took me a day or so to adjust to the sights, acknowledge the truth unfolding before my eyes, and remind myself to let go of any beliefs I may have had about how this trip would replicate the last one, or hold me in that same place. This is a complex, rapidly changing environment, and I cannot, and probably never will understand all the geo-political reasons for such a deluge. Instead, I put on my acupuncturist's 'hat', and moved forward in this evolving landscape.

I was a sole therapist for the first 3 days, arriving just after a physiotherapist colleague Ulrike, who had been treating there for a month. Ulrike had left me a beautifully laid-out patient list, and alongside the bookings, the interpreter had written a 'substitutes' list. The rapid turnover of patients resulting in them not-showing, and this new way of booking with potentially two people showing at the same time, meant a different approach to practice. I had the use of two rooms, and so I could treat in a 'multi-bed' set up if necessary. And from there on, there was a process of continual adaptation and response.

Before long, we were a team of four – two physiotherapists, and two acupuncturists. It was wonderful to be part of an integrated team, with my colleague Sarah again, and alongside the new interpreters. We found a rhythm that worked for us all, to meet the needs of as many we could. There were many more whole family groups, single women and pregnant women this year. I was able to treat more children with non-incentive Japanese needling techniques modified for pediatrics, tuina massage and moxibustion.

Case study 1



L's father had been having some treatment with us and mentioned his youngest daughter (4.5 years old) was suffering with nausea, vomiting and had a history of digestive issues. She'd been given multivitamin nutritional supplement drinks in the past in an attempt to resolve her potential for malnutrition. L presented as much taller than her 4.5 years, more like 7, and her family thought that this was perhaps a result of the nutritional drinks. However, she still suffered from a poor appetite, and was very quickly weakened if she missed a meal, which was frequent during their journey to the camp, and still within the camp. Lina had to be carried to the container due to weakness, and had floppy limbs, sad eyes, mute and no energy for any expression. She could barely nod a yes or no to questions, or smile. After some light palpation and some Shonishin (Japanese pediatric acupuncture) techniques, I used some moxas roll lightly over her lower belly, legs, arms and back. The treatment took 10 minutes. I advised her parents to bring her back daily. The following day they reported that she was feeling less nauseous and energized, though still did not have much of an appetite. She started to smile and make more eye contact. I treated with moxa again. She loved the heat and I could see her body relaxing as it absorbed the warmth. The third day they reported that she was managing to eat more. Lina started to speak with me more directly, one-word answers, directing me to where she liked the heat treatment. On the fourth day, she was more energetic and joyful. Treatment continued in a similar way – no needles, instead light strokes, tapping and moxibustion. She became more engaged and engaging; she started to talk. And once she started, there was no stopping her – stories upon stories of her journey, her family, her likes, dislikes, her life. It felt like she was regaining her power and agency; she loved returning for her daily top-ups, which were taking less and less 'treatment' time, and more chatting, social interaction and engagement. She was making a beautiful return to health in a matter of days.

Case study 2

I witnessed the comprehensive integration of Earth Medicine's therapeutic provision when I started working with B a 28- year-old single, disabled male. He had arrived at the camp a few weeks before and had been referred to Earth Medicine via another charity. On assessing him, we devised a treatment plan that incorporated daily acupuncture initially to strengthen his digestive system, and when he was strong enough, to alternate acupuncture with physiotherapy rehabilitation. His old and poorly-fitting braces and crutches were all considered for updating. His medication, which he had not been able to access, was reviewed by Earth Medicine's visiting doctor, Dr Gerhard. He also did a full physical examination alongside the physiotherapist to ascertain if any other treatments, scans or tests were needed. I treated B initially with gentle moxibustion daily and within a few days, he felt strong enough to start the physio rehabilitation. The alternating daily program continued until my departure, by which time he was stronger and able to manage longer stretches of physiotherapy. I did very few 'needle 'treatments on B, because he was so depleted; as he regained his digestive strength through moxibustion, he started feeling more stronger physically. On a mental and emotional level, he expressed that he was feeling safer and I believe this was because, more than any of our interventions, we were listening to him.

I am grateful to Earth Medicine's core team for their unrelenting commitment to the therapists who participate whole-heartedly in delivering treatment programs, and to the patients who turn up for those programs. Together, theirs is an honest, enabling and life-changing community.

Houri Alavi
Acupuncturist
December 2023



Spending time **TOGETHER**

As part of our complementary approach, Earth Medicine pays great attention to strengthening ties of coexistence beyond daily work. Thanks to the support given from Brot und Bücher e.V now we can enjoy our gathering in a beautiful land surrounding by the nature and olives groves in Lesvos.

* * *

Our plan for the future is to offer recreational activities in the nature for children living in the camp in Lesvos. All this work will require the asylum seekers community to get involve, together everything could be possible.



The burial ground of asylum seekers in Lesvos was created in 2015. Since then, many more refugees and asylum seekers had been and currently continue to get buried at this site. Today we would like to restore it to offer a respectful and dignified burial, which is deemed as basic human right by the European convention.

• *Memorial to Humanity* •



EARTH MEDICINE

ABOUT

In the Greek island of Lesbos, there is a field nestled amongst olive groves where hundreds of graves serve as resting place to refugees who have lost their lives at sea and on the island since 2015.

As a humanitarian organisation, we believe that everyone has the right to a dignified burial. We believe that this right should be respected in every context including when people have migrated escaping violence, war, natural disasters and starvation.

CAMPAIGN AIMS

- To create a respectful and dignified resting place, non-intrusive to locals, where refugees and asylum seekers can meet that most sacred of human needs that is the mourning of our loved ones.
- To pay homage to the thousands upon thousands of people whose lives, dreams, and hopes ended abruptly while trying to get to safety in Europe.
- To protect the refugees' basic human right to be treated with respect and dignity which is stipulated by European legislation and which lies at the core of international human rights law.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Clearing up the space of bushes and vegetation over-growth.
- Clearly outlining each of the graves and placing a headstone on each of them with the name and details of the deceased, when known.
- Designing the architectural landscape of the site, in consultation with the municipality.
- Carrying out the landscaping including the clear demarcation of all graves, walk paths, fences, and a memorial stone.



- Death has no borders
- A place for families to mourn according to their culture
- Give the deceased their last honour and dignity
- A person's grave is their first home in the afterlife
- In life and death all humans are equal

INTRODUCTION

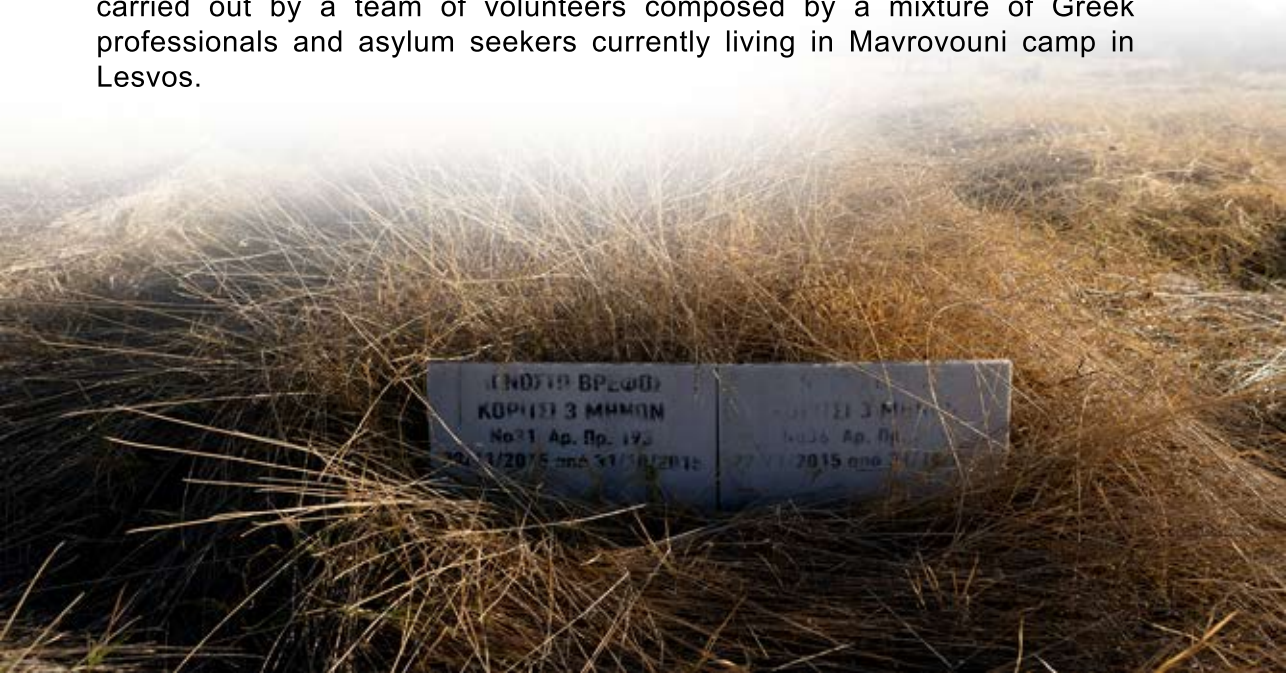
The project Memorial to Humanity first started as an idea to clean and tidy up the burial ground in Kato Tritos, Lesvos, where asylum seekers were being buried. This idea sparked from conversations between Fabiola Velasquez, Earth medicine's founder and director and Prof. Dr. Gerhard Trabert from the German organisation Armut und Gesundheit. It then evolved into a plan to transform the burial ground into a more dignified resting place with proper graves instead of the existing mounds of earth on the ground, and to make into a place where all those who have lost their lives seeking refuge in Europe could be remembered.

The planning of this project involved learning about the legal requirements that countries need to follow in order to bury those who die on their land and getting informed about the customs and rituals performed in countries where asylum seekers were coming from so that this could be honoured. All of this, along with the planning and coordination of every stage of the project, has been the work of Ms. Velasquez, while the finances have been covered by Armut und Gesundheit. After the planning stage, permission to carry out the works had to be obtained from the local authorities in Mytilene. Earth Medicine applied for this permit and after months of waiting and conversations with local officials, permission was granted on 23 May 2023.

The next stage of the project consisted of obtaining the materials from local suppliers and coordinating the workers so that works could be initiated. Works on the project finally started in October 2023. Different teams have been working intensely since then and we expect the project to be completed by April 2024. The ceremony to mark its completion and to hand it over to the local authorities will be on 17th April 2024.

As mentioned in the official proposal, all necessary materials and tools were bought in the shops local to the burial ground – in the surroundings of Kato Tritos village, and in Mytilene, the island's capital. For us it was important to use this opportunity to strengthen our relationship with the community by contributing to the local economy and by showing our respect to this land and those who live here.

It was also important for us to involve people from the local community and from the asylum seekers population in the project to promote integration and increase community cohesion. All the work pertaining to the project is being carried out by a team of volunteers composed by a mixture of Greek professionals and asylum seekers currently living in Mavrovouni camp in Lesvos.



STAGES

of the project



Here will be a space where asylum seekers can meet the most sacred of human needs that is the mourning of our loved ones.

The following are the main steps of the project. Each stage has been closely monitored and approved on completion by representatives of the Municipality of Mytilene, which is the authority responsible for the burial site.

1. Cleaning and cutting grass and bushes

The project works officially started on 14th October 2023 when Prof. Dr. Gerhard Trabert and the team of asylum seekers, coordinated by Earth Medicine's worker Mr. Sohrab Shizrad, started to clear the site by cutting overgrown grass and bushes. This allowed us to start the identification of the existing graves.

2. Creating the burial ground plot, picture files and grave count

On October 20th, 2023, when the terrain was fully cleared, the technical team composed by the Topographer Stelios Tsobanellis, the Photographer Thomas Mamakos, and Earth Medicine's Administrative and local team coordinator Malvina Tampra, started to work on drawing the land plot.

The main purpose of this was to obtain a detailed map of the site which allowed us to identify all the existing graves in the burial ground. The picture files compiled during this time constitute a visual record of all the graves as we initially found them.

The most difficult tasks during this stage were counting the graves and identifying the people buried in them. We have not been able to find any records of the deceased and we don't know if they actually exist. The majority of the graves had been marked with a wooden stick which in some cases had no name, and in others the name was written in ink but it was now faded and illegible.

In addition, a number of deaths have occurred at sea and in the refugee camp since the work started and the bodies have been buried in this burial ground. This has meant that the ground plot has had to be constantly updated and amended.

3. Construction of the graves

In November 15th 2023, the team of builders started to make an external frame around each of the 189 graves which are currently found in the burial ground. However, this number is expected to increase as, unfortunately, drownings are still happening in the Aegean Sea around the island as people continue to make the dangerous crossing towards Lesbos.

The team of builders composed by asylum seekers has already finished building in concrete the external frames of all existing graves. Marble plates with the names carved on them (when the name is known) will then be placed on the graves. Those whose name is still unknown will also have a marble plate on their grave.

A layer of resistant plastic or PVC will cover the surface of each grave to prevent the vegetation to grow through. On top of this, there will be a layer of white pebbles and finally a layer of white plaster will be applied to give a tidy finish to the graves.

We have been careful to follow the indications of asylum seekers regarding the customary requirements for a proper grave in their countries of origin. This includes not only how the graves are built but also the direction of in which they are placed and other important considerations regarding burial rituals.





5. Grave's pathways and fence construction

The final steps include the construction of small pathways between the graves to allow visitors to walk safely and prevent them from stepping on the graves. This will also give shape to the site and create a tidy, organised feel to it. Finally, we will build a fence around the burial ground. We are expecting the Topographer from the Municipality to give us a final plot, in order to do this final step.

Opening Ceremony

WEDNESDAY
17 APR
2024

CEREMONY TO
Memorial to Humanity
Kato Tritos, Lesvos - Greece



Yearly Treatment Activities



JANUARY - 282 treatments

Valerie Boisson-Acupuncture
Anna Rosset-Acupuncture
Martina Guenther-Homeopathy
Lara Jakobs-Physiotherapy



FEBRUARY - 159 treatments

Janina Moelle – Bioenergetic therapist

We have started to prepare the fundraising campaign regarding to the burial site in Kato Tritos. Our team went there with the photographer, Thomas Mamakos, who took a short video and many photos of the site, in order to be used in the fundraising campaign.



MARCH - 142 treatments
Mirijam Vogels-Homeopathy

After a very long period of preparation, finally an orthotic specialist for prosthetic fittings from Athens visited the island and examined two of our patients.

On 23rd of March Ramadan started.



APRIL - 72 treatments
Beatrix Szabo-Homeopathy

We have delivered the devices from the orthotic center in Athens and given to the boy, who feels much more comfortable and secure when he walks.

We prepared the trip to the orthotic center in Athens for Sadio, on 2, 3 and 4 of May in order to adjust the device and deliver the final orthosis.



MAY - 99 treatments
Hilary Sharp-Acupuncture

Sadio Dhayow finally travelled to Athens on 2,3 and 4 of May with a member of Earthmedicine, in order the orthotic doctors to measure and adjust the device on her.

10 days later we delivered it and gave it to Sadio. Now, she is attending physio treatments daily in order to get used to the new device and improve her mobility.



JUNE - 155 treatments
Gilles Andre- Acupuncture
Tom Bingert-Homeopathy
Sandra Arbelaez-Acupuncture

We prepared jars filled with St. John's wort plant and extra virgin olive oil to be macerated under the sun, in order to have our own therapeutical massage oil.



JULY - 183 treatments
Sylvain Juilland–Acupuncture
Fabienne Taugwalder–Acupuncture
Claire Laverly-Physiotherapy



AUGUST
Closed for summer vacations



SEPTEMBER - 114 treatments
Ulrike Straten-Physiotherapist



OCTOBER - 204 treatments
Maria Ines Freixeiro-Physiotherapist
Joana Marques-Physiotherapist
Sarah Budd Bell-Acupuncturist
Houri Alavi- Acupuncturist

We got the permission from the Camp manager to place 2 more containers beside the first one. We immediately began to properly equip the 2 containers, so that the three areas of our treatments- Acupuncture, Homeopathy and Physiotherapy- would have their own separate space.



NOVEMBER - 88 treatments
Martina Guenther-Homeopathist
Margret Pohl-Pediatrician

We started working in Kato Tritos burial site for the "Memorial to Humanity" project in collaboration with Armut und Gesundheit e.V and under the supervision of the Municipality of Mytilini. All workers are volunteers living inside Mavrovouni camp.

DECEMBER

No therapists came during December. We continue our work in Kato Tritos' burial site.

TOTAL YEARLY TREATMENTS: 1.526



Statistical Data **2023**

**Activity
&
Financial**

Statements

FINANCIAL REPORT

of Money Distribution for the Year of **2023**

- FOOD SUPPLIES **5,39%**
- TRANSPORTATION **5,81%**
- ACCOMODATION **12,62%**
- MEDICAL SUPPLIES **14,51%**
- OFFICE SERVICES **34,88%**
- Equipment-Infrastructure **26,78%**

Donations

110.310

€

**Money
Distribution**

77.953

€

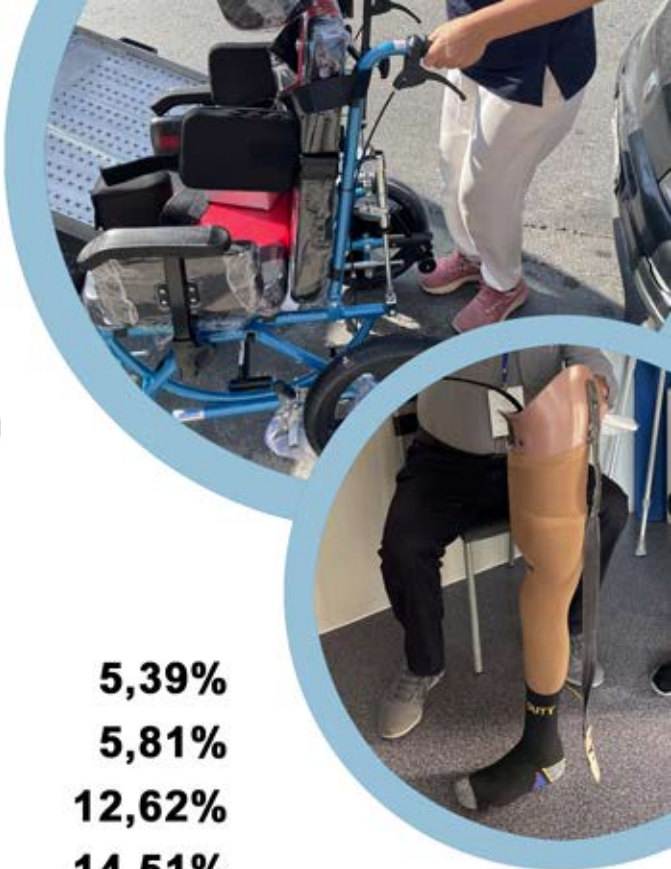
**Reserve
Fund**

32.357

€

EARTH MEDICINE

PHYSICAL REHABILITATION



Activity Report

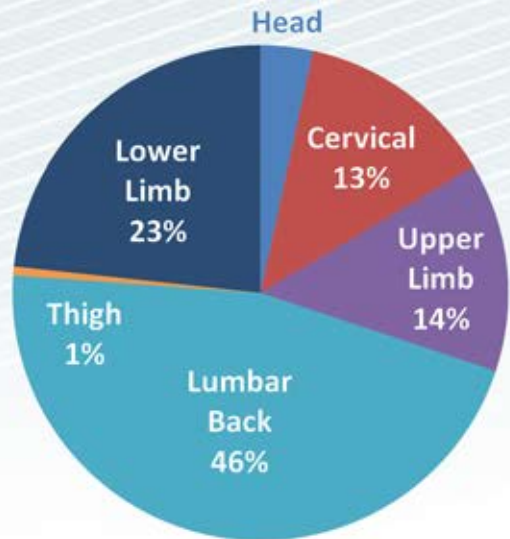
EARTH MEDICINE'S unique combination of therapeutic approaches gives access to physical rehabilitation for those who are most vulnerable among asylum seekers and in the local society.

Earth Medicine's team of therapists 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.

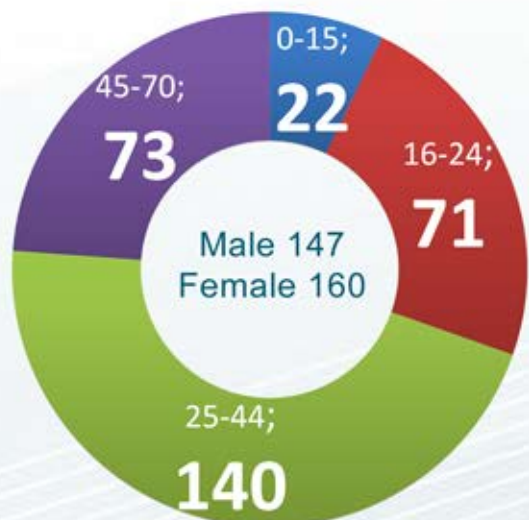
We combine therapies such as: physiotherapy, traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, therapeutic massage, homeopathy, and orthopedic medical examinations to improve the health of vulnerable asylum seekers with physical impediments.

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.

Injury Type



Age Group



New Patients



Total Patients





EARTH MEDICINE

THANK YOU

for your support

We are very grateful to have our collaborators supporting our work on Lesbos. Our work could not be possible without the immense help of all of you.



Dr. Gerhard Trabert.
Armut und Gesundheit
in Deutschland e.V.

<https://www.armut-gesundheit.de/>



Bridge of Humanity e.V.
Ms. Maria-Theresia Schneider.
<https://www.bridgeofhumanity.org/>



BROT+
BÜCHER e.V.

Mr. Werner Kinkel.
<https://brotundbuecher.de/ueber-uns/>



Space Eye.
Mr. Hans-Peter Buschheuer.
<https://www.facebook.com/spaceeyeorg/>



Alea Horst.



**STIFTUNG
STERN**
Hilfe für Menschen e.V.

Stiftung Stern e.V

WIR MACHEN MIT!

Leave no one behind



CivilFleet
e.V Germany



EARTH MEDICINE

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