



Holding Safe Spaces Through Prolonged Crisis

EARTH 2026 MID-YEAR IMPACT REPORT

Healing, Connection, & Mental Health Support for Farsi Speaking Communities in Iran, Afghanistan, & Across the Diaspora



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Context: Living Through Prolonged Crisis and Trauma

This reporting period (January-July 2026) encompasses an exceptionally complex & prolonged period of crisis for people in Iran & Farsi-speaking communities around the world. Since January 2026, a series of overlapping events has created an intense & continuously evolving humanitarian & psychological crisis.

The violent suppression of nationwide protests, including the killing of tens of thousands of innocent lives, was followed by mass arrests, executions, & continued political repression. These events were compounded by war, widespread insecurity, economic hardship, & prolonged internet and communication shutdowns that severely disrupted people's ability to access information, remain in contact with loved ones, & maintain ordinary forms of employment, services, social connection, & support.

Rather than occurring as isolated events, these crises unfolded in rapid succession & often overlapped. The effects of years of hardship on the mental wellbeing of Iranians are well documented. Yet the events of this reporting period did not replace previous suffering — they built upon it. Each new loss, every communication blackout, & every wave of fear added to an already overwhelming emotional burden. For many people, there was little opportunity to regain a sense of stability before another period of violence, uncertainty, or disruption began.

The impact extended far beyond Iran's borders. Farsi-speaking communities across the diaspora experienced prolonged uncertainty & distress, particularly when communication shutdowns prevented them from reaching family members & loved ones inside Iran during some of the most critical periods of violence, armed conflict, & repression.

For many, days passed without knowing whether those they loved were safe, injured, detained, or even alive. At the same time, Afghan communities, particularly women & girls, were facing overlapping crises of their own. Many had been unexpectedly forced to return from Iran to Afghanistan, often leaving family members behind, while prolonged communication shutdowns in Iran also disrupted online educational opportunities that had become a vital alternative for Afghan girls & women excluded from schools & universities under Taliban restrictions.

Our Role:

As the crisis deepened, EARTH drew on years of experience & a community-based network that had already served more than 12,500 children and adults, stepping forward to support Farsi-speaking communities facing severe psychological, physical, and security-related risks. By providing free mind-body skills groups and workshops in different formats, EARTH created structured, trauma-informed safe spaces for women, minorities, displaced people, and many other marginalized communities.

These offerings provided an evidence-based approach that can help people overcome a sense of isolation and loneliness, while teaching tools to work through traumatic stress, strengthen resilience, & support their mental & physical wellbeing. They also gave participants opportunities to reconnect with others in a safe & supportive environment, & provided them with effective tools for self-care & for supporting their communities during prolonged uncertainty, violence, & crisis.

In addition, EARTH facilitated employment & other career development opportunities within its network: Six EARTH mental health professionals have gained employment as counselors or therapists with EARTH partners such as Iran House NGO, Kian Foundation, and others. At least 8 have successfully migrated from Iran to Europe, Canada, or US to pursue advanced degrees, medical residencies, & post-doctoral programs. Another 6 have started their own businesses. EARTH functions as a network for referrals & ongoing social support for growing circles of individuals.

Finally, EARTH’s social media pages provide high quality educational materials on health & healing, announce groups & workshops. EARTH also connects interested facilitators & clients with independent journalists to carry the voices of Iranians living in Iran to the outside world, building bridges of unity in diversity, enhanced awareness & compassion.

Impact in a Glance



During a time when connection & safety were disrupted, EARTH created accessible safe spaces and provided vital trauma-informed mental health support for thousands of Farsi-speaking individuals from diverse backgrounds & communities, while empowering new leaders & building the capacity to extend that support to many others.

Single-Session Online Workshops: Immediate Response

Free one-time online Mind-Body Skills Workshops were initiated as a rapid response during a period of profound uncertainty, acute distress, & repeated traumatic events affecting Farsi-speaking communities. At a time when many people were facing overlapping psychological, physical, & social pressures, there was an urgent need for culturally-relevant, trauma-informed support that could be accessed quickly & at scale.

These workshops offered practical tools to help participants regulate their nervous systems, manage overwhelming stress, & find ways to care for themselves and their families during some of the most difficult days of the crisis. In addition, by practicing expressing themselves in a safe space & actively listening to each other, participants had the opportunity to process difficult emotions, & created bonds of connection & co-regulation with others around the globe.

From individuals living in Iran and Afghanistan, to Farsi-speaking university students living across Europe, Canada, & the US to refugees, asylum seekers & migrants, participants came together & got to know each other in a meaningful way despite all the forces that aimed to separate them. This single-session format allowed us to reach large numbers of people rapidly & provide immediate support focused on stabilization, self-care, safe connection, & protection of mental, emotional, & physical wellbeing.

1,894

Participation Requests

105

Workshops

1,475

Attendances

432

From Inside Iran

What These Spaces Offered:

- Support for regulating overwhelming stress
- Space to grieve & process difficult emotions
- Being heard without judgment
- Opportunities to reconnect with others during isolation
- Practical mind-body skills participants could continue using

From Emergency Response to Sustained Support

As EARTH responded to the immediate crisis through one-time workshops designed to reach large numbers of people in a short period of time, it also worked to create longer & more sustained forms of support. Following the training of six new Farsi-speaking supervisors, 8 eight-week Mind-Body Skills Groups were launched for people directly affected by the crises. These groups allowed participants to move beyond immediate support & engage more deeply & with a wider variety of mind-body practices over time. Participants were able to build trust & safer relationships within the group, with repeated opportunities to express & process the complex traumatic experiences they faced in a supportive, empowering environment.

Building on this work, EARTH and its partners held & supervised 20 four-week groups specifically designed for women inside Iran. Some of the groups were in person, others online. Many participants had been directly affected by the ongoing crisis, violence & other challenges. The 4-week format allowed EARTH to extend support to a larger number of people while still offering continuity, structured practice, & the possibility of meaningful connection beyond a single crisis-response session.

EARTH partnership with the Arizona Persian Cultural Center made possible access to free daily VPN codes for 1000s of individuals in Iran to facilitate their free & secure access to internet, both to participate in mental health services, & also for their other vital needs. Given the censorship & limited access to internet, this service added significant impact to people's lives.

Testimonials from Mind-Body Groups

I entered the group feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. By the final session, I felt lighter & calmer.

For the first time, I felt safe enough to speak about things I had never been able to share.

Talking about my grief in the group brought a sense of calm to my heart.

Learning & capacity building did not stop when the crisis began.

Amid the overlapping crises of 2026, EARTH and The Center for Mind-body Medicine made a deliberate decision to train six new Farsi-speaking supervisors. As facilitators were supporting highly vulnerable communities through periods of acute distress & prolonged uncertainty, the need for stronger & more accessible supervision & mentorship of group facilitators became increasingly urgent. Training new supervisors made it possible not only to respond to immediate needs, but also to strengthen the quality, continuity, & sustainability of the support being offered.

Each new supervisor expands the capacity of the network by supporting more facilitators, helping them deliver groups with greater confidence, consistency, & adherence to the evidence-based CMBM model, while also creating the conditions for additional facilitators & groups to emerge over time.

Three of the 6 new supervisors were based inside Iran. During war and a nationwide internet shutdown, members of the training cohort travelled toward the Iran-Turkey border to gain reliable internet access to complete supervision training. Their effort turned professional development into crisis-time capacity building, helping ensure that facilitators serving communities during some of the most difficult moments of the crisis could themselves remain supported, supervised, & connected.



Closing ceremony for the new supervisor training program.

Six newly trained Farsi-speaking supervisors completed the program and prepared to support their communities while Iran remained affected by war, nationwide internet shutdowns, and the severe repression of protesters.



Testimonial

In the middle of war & a nationwide internet shutdown, two friends & I travelled to the Iran–Turkey border. We spent ten days there simply to access unrestricted internet so we could take part in our training. Learning how to help other human beings knows no borders, no allies, & no enemies. As a newly certified CMBM supervisor working from inside Iran, I now support supervisees in Europe. They facilitate groups in Afghanistan. My senior supervisor in Houston reviews my notes, while my colleague in Germany mentors her own supervisees. A world that once felt impossibly large now fits onto our computer screens. We hold one another through these connections, & somehow, our world keeps growing.



The Impact Beyond Numbers

Trauma research shows that timely & effective support can be a powerful protective factor for individuals living through traumatic events. When people are able to experience safe connections, feel heard, & learn evidence-based skills to help regulate overwhelming stress, they may be less likely to develop severe & long-lasting psychological & physical consequences.

For Farsi-speaking communities inside Iran, Afghanistan, & across the diaspora that have been experiencing severe violence, war, loss, repression, & prolonged insecurity, these supportive safe spaces & trauma-informed groups provided an important protective counterforce against the conditions disrupting their lives & wellbeing.

During this reporting period, EARTH provided these forms of vital support to more than 1,800 participants. At the same time, EARTH trained & supported facilitators & supervisors who can continue expanding this network, with adequate funding & resources, to reach many more individuals in need. The significance of this work therefore extends beyond the numbers. It builds an ongoing community-based capacity to offer healing & trauma-informed support to people at high risk who are living through complex & difficult times.



Testimonials from Workshops

I had been living with severe stress & panic attacks, often feeling stuck in survival mode. After learning the shaking & gentle movement practices in EARTH's workshops, I began using them whenever I felt tension, & they helped me feel calmer. I was afraid that hearing others' experiences might make me feel worse, but instead I felt empathy, safety, & genuine support.

What stayed with me most was the calm and positive presence of the facilitator. The workshop helped shift my emotional state & gave me a renewed sense of wellbeing.



Tan va Jaan

Throughout the reporting period, EARTH's Instagram page for Farsi speakers (Tan va Jaan) has continued to serve as a platform for sharing mental health education & connecting Farsi speaking communities across the globe. The platform featured interviews with mental health professionals & facilitators, making mental health information more accessible, encouraging community engagement, & connecting people in Iran & across the diaspora with trauma-informed evidence-based resources, workshops, & opportunities for support. This content was also shared through EARTH's LinkedIn & Facebook pages, helping connect these resources with an even wider audience.



How Is This Possible

OUR FUNDING SUPPORT

Funding & Support	Details
Funding Sources	• The Wild Gifting Project • International Planned Parenthood Federation – South Asia Region (grant to Spectrum) • Crowdfunding with 200+ individual and business donors • #CookForIran
Volunteer Contributions	Hundreds of volunteers contributed thousands of hours in marketing, translation (Farsi, Dari & Kurdish), networking, resource sharing, counseling, facilitation, website and social media development, and community coordination.
Collaborating Organizations	• The Center for Mind-Body Medicine (CMBM) • Spectrum • Iran House NGO • MedInfinet • Kian Foundation • Raha Foundation • Harat School • Roshan Afghanistan Online University • Arizona Persian Cultural Center (AZPCC) <i>Provides free VPN access to EARTH's network for daily use.</i>

Empowering All Relatives to Heal is a grassroots organization built upon a community-based, participatory action approach. EARTH supports intersectional healing, health, & well-being of people, communities, & our environment using depth-oriented strategies that recognize interdependence in all things.

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Healing & empowerment of individuals in small groups & in one community have a rippling impact that expands far beyond the initial circle. Hope & mutual aid go viral. Together, we can build peace within & beyond all the walls that separate us.

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