

An Impact Sphere as Seen Through the Sheatufim Prism

Hamerhav – The Impact Sphere of the Ethiopian Community in Israel





Intro

This article offers a look at some of the stages in a unique and fascinating journey taken by a community with multiple strengths and assets, who chose to spearhead a shared initiative while displaying leadership and assuming responsibility for changing the face of their own community and the future of Israeli society through joint action in an impact sphere.

“Reflecting a concern for our future and the future of Israeli society, we, the members of the Ethiopian community in Israel, have chosen to assume responsibility, create a new reality and take action to achieve it...” (An excerpt from the vision formulated by the Ethiopian community in Israel)

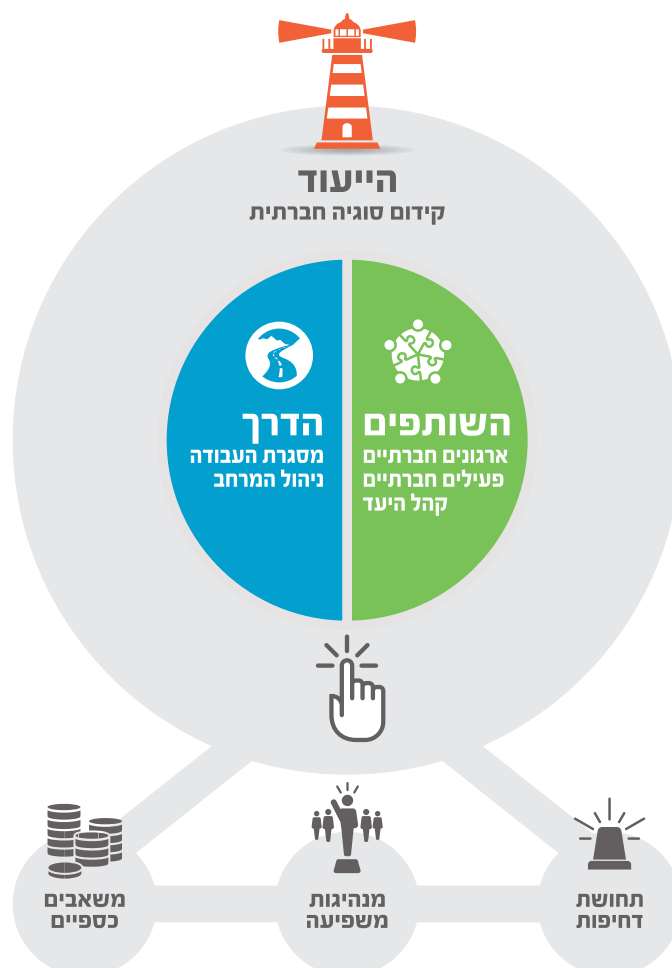
Hamerhav is the fulfillment of a social idea conceived by social organizations and activists from the Ethiopian community in Israel, who chose to undertake a shared initiative and impact the community's future. Hamerhav's goal, as defined by its members when launching the initiative, was to formulate a vision for the Ethiopian community in Israel, achieved through a participatory process involving the larger community. The vision was drafted so it could serve as a 'beacon' when making decisions that affect the life of the community in Israel. In the vision document, the members of Hamerhav stressed that the community's physical journey ended when they arrived in Jerusalem, but it also marked the start of their journey in Israeli society. The organization we work for, Sheatufim, was connected with this initiative from 2011 to 2016, serving in different capacities with varying degrees of involvement.



About

An **impact sphere** is an action framework for CEOs of social organizations and civil society activists in which they address a shared social issue. An **impact sphere** aims to advance a shared social cause by bringing together all the relevant social organizations – which cannot advance that cause when working independently. The activities carried out in an impact sphere are founded on consensus, individual and organizational choice, and trust between the partners. All of them are critical foundations for a shared process and the existence of an impact sphere.

An **impact sphere** is a methodology whose development was inspired by the collective impact approach. It also relies on the experience Sheatufim has gained in working with Social CEOs and the civil society in Israel. Sheatufim regards **collective impact and impact spheres** as two key strategies for achieving wide-ranging social impact. Sheatufim has expertise in collective processes that advance shared social impact, including the development of a variety of methodologies and diverse knowledge relating to the subject. In this article, we would like to tell the *Hamerhav* story, which is the story of a unique and unprecedented impact sphere in Israel's third sector. We will tell the story as seen through the Sheatufim prism – having served as the professional body that facilitated the process. What makes an **impact sphere** distinct is that it is an initiative undertaken by a single sector, characterized by multiple work-related dimensions of a highly complex nature. Using the *Hamerhav* story, we chose to ask three strategic questions regarding impact spheres, coupled with recommendations which in our view can benefit impact spheres as well as current and future shared initiatives in Israel's civil society.



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Embarking on the Journey

The idea was initially conceived in 2011 by a number of organizations active in the Ethiopian community in Israel, leading to a decision to examine the feasibility of undertaking a shared initiative. The main objective was to produce change in the lives of the members of the community by bringing together social organizations and activists that would join forces and take action. The action strategy that was selected was an **impact sphere**, and Sheatufim was chosen by the initiators to professionally facilitate the process. The shared initiative began with a feasibility study and groundwork that lasted about two years, in the course of which a few founding organizations worked together. During that period, they began defining the common goal, reached a consensus about the working assumptions, and mapped out the “players” in the field. At about the same time, the Office of the State Comptroller published a report dealing with the Ethiopian community in Israel, which the members of the emerging impact sphere regarded as a highly important document that required attention and joint action aimed at changing the complex reality it described.

The report published by the **Office of the State Comptroller** in May 2013 was entitled: **Factors Affecting the Integration of the Ethiopian Community – Material Flaws in the Management of a National Plan**. The findings of the report indicated that despite the numerous efforts and resources that had been invested in integrating the Ethiopian community in Israel, the gaps between them and the rest of the population were still considerable. The State Comptroller, Justice Joseph Chaim Shapira, wrote the following in the preface to the report: *“...this report articulates a need to take action here and now. The Ethiopian community in Israel is an outstanding community that has many talents and tremendous potential, and it is unfortunate that this potential is not being realized.”* The report reviewed the various steps that had been taken to advance and integrate the members of the Ethiopian community in the school system and higher education, military service, employment in the public sector, and housing. Among other things, the report reflected the pressing need for joint efforts by third sector organizations for coordination purposes, sharing knowledge, and conducting an informed dialog with the government. The report led to discussions within the community, and the organizations that had initiated the impact sphere viewed it as an opportunity to invite social organizations and activists to a joint meeting – which was the first and only one of its kind at the time.

“Our journey in Israeli society has been replete with pitfalls and crises, and it is far from over – our Jewishness is questioned, we contend with racism because of the color of our skin, we are treated in a discriminatory, humiliating and even violent manner by some people inside and outside the establishment, and we come from a disadvantageous economic and educational starting point – all of which have made it difficult for many of us to feel equal among equals.” (An excerpt from the vision formulated by the Ethiopian community in Israel)

In October 2013, a meeting was held with CEOs of organizations and activists under the heading: “Leading Change, Championing a Vision.” The purpose of the meeting was to explore ways of working together in order to address the lessons drawn from the State Comptroller’s report and change the complex reality it articulated. Around 40 CEOs of social organizations and activists attended the meeting, where they were exposed to the considerable power that comes with conducting a shared dialog. The

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meeting produced a shared sense of urgency and enabled the participants to grasp the potential inherent in this type of partnership for the community. It also included an in-depth discussion about the findings of the State Comptroller's report, as well as ideas about possible courses of action that could be taken to create the desired change. Furthermore, the participants were introduced to impact spheres as a model they could adopt. That meeting was a significant milestone in the *Hamerhav* journey and served as an impetus for establishing the shared initiative.

Paving the Path

In January 2014, the organizations and activists made a joint decision to establish an impact sphere to promote the Ethiopian community in Israel, and Sheatufim was chosen to be its professional facilitator. Further to that decision, an agreement was signed in May 2014 between the initiating and representative organizations and Sheatufim, which defined the role of the professional facilitator in the planned initiative for a period of about two years.

From the moment the decision was made to establish *Hamerhav* and up to its actual launch, discussions and meetings were held to define the needs as well as the frameworks and nature of the process, enabling us, the professional team, to suggest a process that we felt was best suited to them. The work plan for drafting the vision was designed in keeping with *Hamerhav's* dual objective: (1) formulating a vision for the Ethiopian community in Israel, and (2) involving the members of the community in the process. The plan combined programmatic elements, aimed at achieving the products that had been defined, and process-related elements that included: forming a *Hamerhav* lead team, building trust, creating commitment to the process, and enlisting members and strategic partners to the initiative. To read the work plan – [click here](#).

A festive gathering was held in May 2014, at which *Hamerhav* was launched according to the shared work plan. Based on the discussions and summaries of that meeting, the members of the emerging impact sphere shared a profound understanding that, together, it would be possible to achieve change that is outside the reach of a single organization.

A Long and Winding Road

Following the official launch of *Hamerhav*, Sheatufim facilitated its activities for a period of two-and-a-half years, consisting of three main stages:

1. **Building infrastructures for the shared activities:** setting a common agenda, enlisting stakeholders from the third sector and civil society, building and strengthening a strategic partnership with philanthropy (UJA-Federation of New York, Gandyr Foundation, Baron de Hirsch Fund, Wohl Foundation), creating action mechanisms, and drafting a **basic document** that defines, among other things, the principles according to which *Hamerhav* operates.
2. **Involving the larger community in formulating the vision:** *Hamerhav* members held meetings with people from the community in a number of cities and settings in order to incorporate their input in the vision. Those meetings were called "*merhavonim*" and utilized a variety of methodologies. Upon completion of that stage, a "***Merhavonim***" booklet was prepared that includes the input of around 600 participants. The booklet subsequently served as the basis and inspiration for the vision that was formulated in the third stage.

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3. **Formulating and introducing the vision:** a multi-session workshop was held to formulate the vision, which included serious discussions about deeply-rooted issues related to identity, society and community. There were also meetings to validate the draft versions of the vision, aimed at achieving the fullest and most broad-based consensus possible.

Hamerhav's activities as defined in the work plan were conducted smoothly thanks to a fixed operating mechanism that had been instituted, which included meetings of the lead team twice a month and convening the plenum once every two months. Additionally, there were regular contacts between *Hamerhav's* initiators and the Sheatufim staff.

Mountain Air

The *Hamerhav* product – *A Vision for the Ethiopian Community in Israel* – was unveiled at a gala gathering held in March 2016, attended by the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Director General for Governance and Social Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office. Senior personnel from the three sectors and hundreds of leaders and activists from the Ethiopian community in Israel also took part. The presentation of **the vision** was both celebratory and moving. It incorporates input from the larger community and is meant to serve as a 'beacon' when making decisions that affect the future of the community in Israel. Following the presentation of the vision, several people took part in a panel discussion about the current reality, the key challenges faced by the community, and the possible actions that can be taken to change what the future of the community and Israeli society will look like.

"...We and our children are a natural part of Israeli society, and our involvement in it comes from a place of strength and power and the pride we take in our unique heritage, reflecting the education we have received and the financial and social independence we enjoy. We are influential partners who work in key positions and places where the decisions are made, while leading and building Israel as a society that is free from racism, respects the rights of each individual and citizen, and fosters equal opportunities for all." (An excerpt from the vision formulated by the Ethiopian community in Israel)

Onward to the Next Objective

The vision of the Ethiopian community in Israel, formulated with the involvement of the larger community, is the product that was defined and attained by *Hamerhav*. For that reason it constitutes a critical milestone in the journey undertaken by the Ethiopian community in Israel. Now that the product has been achieved and our role, as the professionals who facilitated the process, has ended, *Hamerhav* is **setting out to meet its next challenge** – namely, implementing the vision in the field.

"...Our cultural assets and communal values, thanks to which we were able to fulfill our dream, are also what will enable us to successfully complete the next stage in our journey – which is implementing our vision of being a naturally influential and leading part of Israeli society. When we succeed, Israeli society will only benefit and become stronger!" (An excerpt from the vision formulated by the Ethiopian community in Israel)

Three Strategic Questions Pertaining to Impact Spheres

Our close familiarity with the civil society, the third sector, and social management in Israel led us to identify three strategic issues that affect the nature of impact spheres and how they are managed.

In this section, we will present some questions and insights, supported by examples from the impact sphere of the Ethiopian community in Israel. In light of our commitment to the principles underlying the work of *Hamerhav*, and in order to maintain confidentiality, we chose to modify some of the details. We invite impact spheres and single-sector shared initiatives to examine their own activities by scrutinizing and reflecting on these questions.



1

The first question:

How does an impact sphere perceive its relationship with the public sector and the private sector?

Because the partners in an impact sphere are social organizations and activists, the question of an impact sphere's relationship with the public sector (the government and its agencies) and the private sector is one of interest. Based on the goal of the particular impact sphere, it is necessary to define that perception in the initial stages of its work and then reexamine it in light of the changing reality. It is advisable to map out who the stakeholders are and determine the type of relationship that best suits the impact sphere with regard to each one of them – ranging from a decision that there will be no relationship, to one that entails informing them about the existence of the impact sphere and/or its activities, or one that includes consulting with them at key points in time, and up to actively involving them in decision-making and in the major junctures throughout the impact sphere's lifespan.

Example – How did it work in the impact sphere of the Ethiopian community in Israel?

Due to the community's past experiences in Israel, which were also discussed in the above-cited report published by the State Comptroller, *Hamerhav* chose to formulate their vision through a third sector process that does not involve other sectors. That choice stemmed from the working assumption that a third sector process would be a way to strengthen the community and its future influence. *Hamerhav's* activities within the third sector parameters enabled them to become acquainted with the diverse voices existing in the community and clarify the different identities that comprise it. *Hamerhav* was also perceived as an important player in the arena. However, the lack of its recognition by the Israeli government and other agencies in the field has posed a challenge when trying to enlist their support for implementing the vision. It should be noted that the gala gathering at which the vision was unveiled was *Hamerhav's* first approach to partners outside the third sector, whose backing is needed in the coming stages.

2

The second question:

What is the significance of an impact sphere whose partners are social organizations and activists?

The uniqueness of an impact sphere is the partnership that is formed between social organizations and activists that work together to advance social causes. An attempt should be made to achieve a mix of partners in the impact sphere that articulates and reflects the makeup of the social field in which it operates as well as the diverse nature of the civil society. When working with organizations and activists, it is necessary to take their different traits into consideration, both from a substantive and a practical perspective. For instance: the CEO and the activist are both driven by their commitment to the particular social cause. But in addition to that commitment, the CEO also represents and has an obligation to his/her organization, whereas the activist is a volunteer and has no formal obligation to any organization. When forming an impact sphere, it is important to define work procedures tailored to its needs. Thus, for example, it is advisable to hold the impact sphere's activities both during the day and in the evening – thereby enabling the members to adjust their work and personal schedules accordingly.

Example – How did it work in the impact sphere of the Ethiopian community in Israel?

Dozens of social organizations and activists are members in *Hamerhav*. Unlike their past experiences, where collaborations within the community could not

3

The third question:

How does an impact sphere enlist the support of its partner social organizations?

be sustained over time, the shared work in *Hamerhav* was welcomed as an innovative initiative that had the potential to make an impact. Nonetheless, due to the existing complexity characterizing its membership, there were some manifestations of cynicism and suspicion along the way and *Hamerhav* had to manage a few conflicts that occurred between the partners. *Hamerhav* held most of its activities in the morning hours, but there were also some evening sessions and conference calls when needed. One of the ways they dealt with the different needs of the organizations and activists was to keep everyone informed through emails, WhatsApp and the *Hamerhav* website.

For an impact sphere to succeed, both the individual goals of the member organizations and the shared goal of the impact sphere need to be achieved. Meeting that combined target necessitates close familiarity with the different goals and an assessment of ways to find their common denominator. The responsibility for doing that falls on the impact sphere leaders and the CEOs of the partner organizations.

The fulfillment of a social organization's mission depends on achieving goals that cannot be met when the organization is operating on its own. Therefore, the Social CEOs have a responsibility to advance their social agendas both through activities in their own organizations and through joint initiatives carried out in partnership with other organizations. As part of the intra-organizational strategic processes that are in place, the CEO needs to find the link between the activities and goals of his/her organization and the goals of the impact sphere.

The leaders of an impact sphere are advised to develop practices that help enlist the support of the organizations that comprise it. Those practices require the leaders to have a good understanding of the shared responsibility in an impact sphere so that they, too, will create opportunities and tools and the CEOs of the organizations will also invest the needed resources.

For instance: appointing a senior staff member to be the Social CEO's right-hand person in all that concerns the activities carried out in the impact sphere, involving experts from the organization in the impact sphere's different teams, inviting the board members of the partner organizations to an impact sphere meeting, and providing a set of tools to connect the organization's management with the impact sphere, such as a presentation of the impact sphere's accomplishments in the past year, etc.

Example – How did it work in the impact sphere of the Ethiopian community in Israel?

In *Hamerhav*, we saw a series of ways that the impact sphere used to make the connection with the partner organizations. The major one that *Hamerhav* employed was adding senior staff from the organizations apart from the CEOs. That way the CEOs received assistance in carrying out their multiple tasks, and the discussions held in *Hamerhav* included other professional points of view from the organizations. This practice required the organizations to allocate time-related resources. Furthermore, the CEOs chose specific ways to solidify the connection between their respective organizations and *Hamerhav*, such as presenting the impact sphere's products at board and management meetings.



So Far and How Far from Here?

The formulation and unveiling of the vision of the Ethiopian community in Israel are a unique and moving achievement. From Sheatufim's perspective, it was a privilege to facilitate the initiative and work closely with the *Hamerhav* members – the social entrepreneurs who conceived the idea and managed to bring it to fruition. The members of *Hamerhav* and the community now face the next critical stage – namely, translating the vision into a strategic plan that will produce a meaningful and profound change in the future of the Ethiopian community, in particular, and Israeli society, in general.

Hamerhav's story can inspire many different stakeholders that are looking for innovative models to achieve social change. We invite leaders, CEOs, social entrepreneurs and professional organizations to study the impact sphere model and assess its relevance to advancing the issues on their respective agendas.



For more information about Impact spheres



Hamerhav website



For more information about Sheatufim

We wish to thank:

"Hamerhav" for choosing us to be their professional facilitators and enabling us to be part of a unique and fascinating process. **Thanks to you, we learned a lot!**

To our **partners** who believed in the value of the process and made a significant contribution to its fulfillment: UJA-Federation of New York, Gandyr Foundation, Baron de Hirsch Fund, Maurice and Vivienne Wohl Charitable Foundation.





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