



SCHWAB FOUNDATION FOR **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

THE VOICE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

## **Irad Eicher and Offer Cohen**

### **Shekulo Tov**

Founded in 2004, Israel

[www.s-tov.org.il](http://www.s-tov.org.il)

**Shekulo Tov specializes in providing occupational rehabilitation services for the mentally handicapped in Israel so they can become equal members of society.**

**Focus:** Disabilities

**Geographic area of impact:** Israel

**Model:** Leveraged Non-Profit

### **Background**

In 2001, Israel passed the Mental Health Rehabilitation Law, enabling NGOs to participate in the rehabilitation of the mentally handicapped. In most cases, however, the rehabilitation programmes are inadequate and lack the necessary creativity to provide the mentally handicapped with a feeling of self-worth, equality and dignity as workers. Shekulo Tov was founded against this backdrop with the belief that every person has the right to be fully integrated into the community. Through its jobs programme, Shekulo Tov has changed the attitude towards rehabilitating the mentally handicapped in Israel.

### **Innovation and Activities**

Shekulo Tov made a breakthrough in the rehabilitation of the mentally handicapped through its vision and belief that the mentally handicapped can be independent people who take responsibility for their lives. Shekulo Tov applies a business approach to its activity and bases its existence on a model of business relationships rather than on donations. Shekulo Tov has created a social consumer platform by branding its products, known for their high quality, with a label that explains the manufacture of each product, and by distributing them through leading marketing channels.

Shekulo Tov operates nine enterprises and ventures and 80 sales points in eight regions in Israel. It provides employment and rehabilitation services for 1,400 mentally handicapped persons as well as a range of cultural and recreational initiatives for 700 additional rehabilitants, including regular trips throughout Israel, bicycle groups and coffee shop gatherings. Among the nine enterprises are Creating an Opportunity, a project that operates 85 sales stands for social consumerism at malls, employing 600 people; Paper Work, a joint Jewish-Arab enterprise that designs products from recycled paper, employing 234 people in three factories; Creative Imagination, a plant that manufactures original children's toys, employing 75 people; and Sweets, a plant that produces uniquely designed confectionaries, employing 100 people.

These models have created employment criteria that have been adopted by Israel's Ministry of Health and are now becoming part of the work procedures for rehabilitation of the mentally handicapped in Israel. Although the ventures of Shekulo Tov are in the fields of employment and recreation, those who participate in the rehabilitation programmes experience changes in every aspect of their lives. In addition to the positive changes in livelihood, they also undergo change in their interpersonal relations – their interpersonal communications skills improve, the relations with their close family are tightened and even their standing in the family is enhanced.

### **The Entrepreneurs**

Shekulo Tov was founded by Irad Eichler. Eichler studied criminology and sociology, with a specialization in anthropology. During his studies, he began to work at Rihan Hostel for young girls at risk, as a guide at the Rosh Ha'Ayin Scouts, and as a coordinator at hostels for the mentally handicapped. Shekulo Tov CEO Offer Cohen joined the group from the business and food industry world, where he served in various executive positions. His previous position was COO of the Erez Bread bakery chain, where he was responsible for all operations and logistics of stores and cafes.