

# Shovels Become Educational Tools

By Sister Leonore Coan, SNDdeN

*“When is a shovel an educational tool,”* asks Tom Keefe, founder and President of International Medical Equipment Collaborative (IMEC). With his question about a simple tool, Tom is finding ways to change lives with simple things in countries and cultures beyond North America.



In 1993, as a hospital administrator, Tom saw massive waste in discarded hospital equipment. In organizing IMEC America, he has been able to change the lives of thousands of people. With help from family and friends, Tom collected and gathered tons of medical surplus. In the IMEC facility in North Andover MA, men and women volunteers, medical professionals skilled in electronics and technology began donating their time to clean, repair and pack this equipment for

shipment to destinations in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Russia and the Philippines. These volunteers have contributed much already in reaching out to enormous needs in our world.

In 2009, IMEC and Tom responded to the needs of our Sisters in two clinics in Ngidinga and Kimwenza, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In partnership with the SNDs, IMEC prepared and shipped surplus materials and equipment to these facilities. With these hospital supplies and furnishings, and ongoing funding from many donors, the new Clinic in Kimwenza, like the Clinic in Ngidinga, is now a vibrant ministry of our Congolese SNDs.

## Tools for Teaching and Living

During the past 6 months Tom has been thinking about other ways to extend the work of IMEC with hoes, picks and shovels. How can farm equipment and other tools impact the lives of children who go to bed hungry each night? What can IMEC do? Where can it start and whom can it involve? How will it distribute equipment?



A little boy having brought water from the river passes the pail through the fence to other children who transfer it to a little girl. She carries her pail full of water to the gardening site at the school. Sr. Marleny Bardales Raymundo oversees the watering process.

*If IMEC can impact the life of a simple farmer with some tools, it will make a difference for some 820 million people who live in chronic hunger throughout our world.*

Considering this goal, IMEC turned to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who teach people “what they need to know to live,” as St. Julie Billiard directed. SNDs educate children and adults of all ages in reading, language and religious education in classrooms, health care facilities *and even in fields*. In rural areas of Tambogrande, Piura, Peru, SNDs had assumed responsibility in 2009 for the administration of a *Fe Y Alegria School System*. In these 31 schools, a farming program is an essential part of the curriculum. IMEC seized this current opportunity in a new program to partner again with SNDs for these small schools.

### “Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty”



Working with US Agriculture consultants and local suppliers, IMEC has gathered small tools and larger land-clearing tools, including wheelbarrows, post diggers and heavy duty hand saws. IMEC, with a cadre of volunteers, men and women from a Fidelity Management Training Program, prepare these suites of farming equipment for the villages in northern Peru. Each Farm Project includes tools to make the cultivation of the soil a little easier.

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Carpenters have devised an irrigation system which allows for even distribution of the water flow. The irrigation system is complete with assembly instructions for a stand to hold the 30 gallon barrow for the water. The barrow is already prepared to receive the tubing that will allow the water to flow evenly through the crops. Each farm project has material for 6 irrigation stands. United Parcel Service (UPS) is donating the shipping costs to transport the 40 Farm Projects from the United States to Peru.

## Teaching Sustainability

This Farm Project is another way for IMEC to share resources for sustainability and to collaborate in an educational project in partnership with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. For our schools in Peru, the project will allow for effective teaching and accessibility to resources



In Tambogrande, Sr. Mary Kavanagh directed students in the tilling and planting process.

needed to tend the earth.

Sr. Marleny Bardales Raymundo and the staff in the Tambogrande region are planning to extend this learning and make equipment accessible to the students' families. IMEC is shipping 40 Farm Suites to Peru in this first phase of the Farming Program. Expanding involvement in our partnership with IMEC enables SNDs to bring about

growth for more people in this rural area. We are able also to envision new possibilities for *our sisters and brothers who live in poverty* in other cultures and countries around our fragmented world.

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