

Volunteers

Work Wonders in Taean, Korea

01 Taeon, the treasure of Korea's West Sea

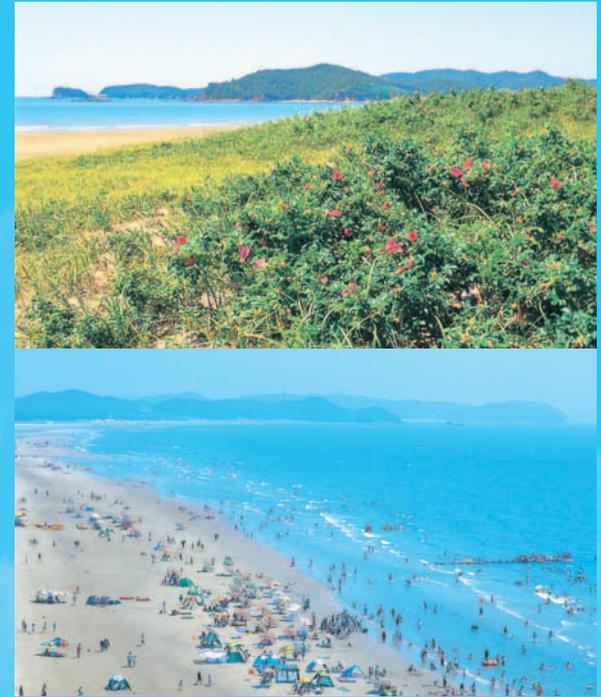
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Taeon, the treasure of Korea's West Sea

Taeon is an area of soft sandy beaches spreading out as far as the eye can see. The presence of rocks carved out by waves for hundreds of millions of years add much to this breathtaking landscape.







DEC. 8. 2007 3:37 PM

An unprecedented disaster consumes both nature and man

On December 7th, the day before the calamity first came to light, the oil tanker Hebei Spirit suddenly collided with a floating crane being towed by a tugboat, the result of which was 12,547 kl of crude oil being spilt into the nearby waters. The strong currents and winds prevalent in the area fanned the rapid dispersal of the oil.



JAN. 15. 2008 2:42 PM

They must have a special gene inside

All at once, the growing wave of volunteers seemed to begin to check the black waves, and the sand on the beach started to return to its natural silvery hue





APR. 30. 2008 10:25 AM

Setting Sail with New Hope

These were people who were infected by “love viruses” and “viruses of sharing” that led them to help shoulder the sadness, pain, and agony of the residents of this afflicted area. The media has described the people’s achievements as “One Million Volunteers’ Miracle.”





SECTION

1

One Million Souls Form a Chain to Clean up Massive Oil Spill

A sea of despair and a sea of miracles

The quiet sounds of the waves, breathing tidelands, and fishing vessels filled to the brim with their catch...The sea was serene...

In a second, everything changed as an oil spill from a huge tanker suddenly turned this peaceful sea into an enormous black monster.



'Plop...plop...plop...plop'

This was the sound the sea made on December 8th, 2007 as it erupted into tears. The residents of Taean County located in Korea's West Coast province of Chungnam will never forget the sound made by the waves on that fateful morning. There was something different about the sea that day, something profoundly out of the ordinary. Gone were its usual pleasant lilts and rhythms. These had been replaced by heavy and dull noises akin to those made by an old machine. The sounds that reached the shores were not the usual chorus of its pleasant pristine waves, but rather a 'Morse Code' of death that had been wired from the epicenter of the dark film of oil in the vast sea.

An unprecedented disaster consumes both nature and man

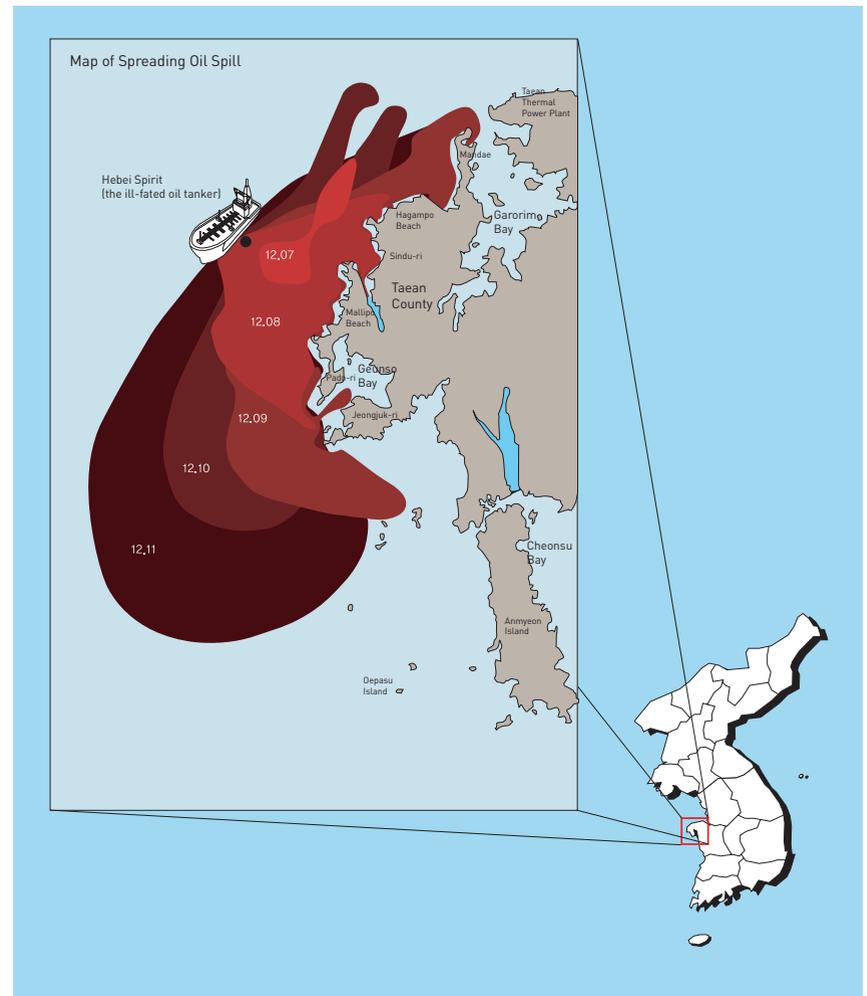
On December 7th, the day before the calamity first came to light, the oil tanker Hebei Spirit suddenly collided with a floating crane being towed by a tugboat, the result of which was 12,547 kl of crude oil being spilt into the nearby waters. The strong currents and winds prevalent in the area fanned the rapid dispersal of the oil. Soon, the crude oil was transformed into an enormous black film of oil that in the matter of one day had effectively usurped the entire coast of Taean County. In an instant, the coastal ecosystem was transformed into a hellish netherworld in which everything was covered with a thick coat of black oil. The tidelands, home to diverse life forms and ecosystems, the endless beaches that had attracted millions of people, beautiful harbors in which numerous vessels of all sizes were anchored, vibrant varieties of fish and shellfish that teemed underneath, and the coastal landscape strewn with breathtaking islands-all had been asphyxiated. The release of this dark fiendish oil bomb turned the coast into untenable hell.





Incapacitated Hebei Spirit and ensuing oil spill

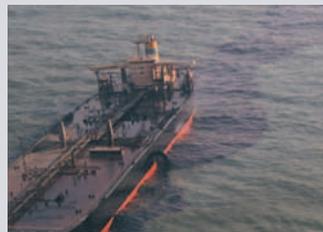
On December 7th, 2007, an accident involving two vessels that occurred approximately 5 nautical miles northwest of Mallipo Beach in Taean County, Chungnam province, resulted in an inordinate amount of crude oil being spilled into the surrounding waters. The Hebei Spirit (146,848 tons), an oil tanker carrying 302,640 kl of crude oil anchored in the sea, was struck by a floating crane (Samsung, 11,828 tons). This incident resulted in puncturing the oil tanker in three places with some 12,547 kl of crude oil oozing into the surrounding waters. The result was the instant contamination of more than 1,200 kilometers of the shoreline along the Korean West Coast area straddling the provinces of Chungnam, Jeonbuk, and Jeonnam. Fifteen beaches and numerous islands in and around the spill's epicenter suffered a direct hit. This calamitous event devastated 57,000 hectares of fish farms and left 62,000 households in near ruins.



The sight of their beloved coast covered in black totally despairs residents

The devastation felt by local residents in the aftermath of this calamity was akin to that of someone who wakes up to find that not only their present but also their future has been taken from them. The majority of the residents in this area are fishermen whose livelihood depends on the sea. They catch fish in their vessels and raise shellfish such as oysters and abalone along the coast. Tourism has always been another source of a steady income for them. Taking stock of what had happened, all these proud people could do was bewilderingly state over and over “It’s all over now” as their hearts were filled with a dark sense of doom.

A fisherman who had up until the day before made his living off the fruits of the sea mournfully looked out at the now blackened expanse and stated, “Catching the fish that teem in these shores every winter has allowed me to save up the money my children need to pay for their tuition. There is no way I can set out now.” Puffing his cigarette, he continued, “My biggest concern at this point is not that I cannot set out to catch fish, but that it will be a few years before the marine products emanating from the Taean area can be sold on the market.” Residents who for years had managed shellfish farms had difficulty chocking back their tears. “The fact that the abalone which we usually harvest at this time have been turned into charcoaled dregs of oil means that each of us will probably suffer losses that run in the 700-800 million won (US\$700,000-800,000) range; however, under the current circumstances, none of us dares to





even bring this topic up.” Meanwhile, residents who run seafood restaurants along the coast lamented, “Our establishments used to be filled with tourists on weekends, now one is hard-pressed to find anybody eating here since the area became a sea of black...Storekeepers are folding their business.”

The residents simply could not sit idly by looking at the damage caused by the disaster. Risking exposure to toxins and the nauseous smell of the crude, they headed down to the seashore during high tide and began to collect the oil with absorption sheets. During low tide, they picked up the oil that had seeped into the sand with shovels. Nevertheless, the waves of oil kept crashing down along the shore. Faced with this seemingly invincible and intractable black sea, these residents were reduced to the type of tears that one sheds when in mourning.

The government was quick to designate the Taeon area as a special disaster area. Meanwhile, police officers and soldiers devoted themselves, to the best of their ability, to the task of cleaning up the waters. Despite making use of all the specialized equipment available, their efforts were for naught. All in all, in excess of 1200 kilometers of coastline found itself being covered by this evil mixture. The swath of land over which the crude held sway was so large that specialists estimated it would take at least 20-30 years before the area could be fully restored. The shoreline soon became littered with dead birds enrobed by a thick coat of oil. A few lucky ones managed to head for far-off places. With no access to the sunlight, underwater organisms began to die. Soon the only thing that remained was a devastated coast and an equally distraught local population.

Clean-up operations in bad weather... “Stop the oil belt”

The waves crashed down furiously as the oil began to spread at an alarming rate. Amidst a numbing winter wind, they had gathered to pour their hearts and soul into the task of purging this foul liquid from the waters.

The Coast Guard was the first to arrive at the site of the oil spill. Arriving by helicopters, members of the Coast Guard did their utmost to transfer the oil from the damaged tank to the ones which had been spared, while also undertaking the task of leaning the stricken tanker to the other side in order to minimize the oil leak. Soon, they were busying themselves establishing an oil fence in the water.

Strong waves and bad weather made the task of stopping the spread of oil into the waters surrounding the incapacitated vessel all but impossible. Confronted by 3-meter high waves and winds blowing at 14 meters/second, even the sturdy Oil Spill Response Vessel (OSRV) dispatched to the area began to be thrown around like a rag doll. The 800 meter-oil fence was soon damaged by the heavy winds.

Kim Ka-yeon, a female member of the Coast Guard who participated in the clean-up activities for 20 days aboard a patrol vessel had the following to say about her experience that first day, “I soon began to detest the unkind winds and waves. Confronted by the worst possible sea conditions imaginable, we found ourselves facing one struggle after another. The situation was so bad at times that we could barely see each other’s faces.”



Soiled Coast Guard boat

The members of the Coast Guard aboard the large-scale OSRVs soon became fatigued from the daily routine of cleaning up the dispersed oil. Their weariness and exhaustion grew incrementally as day gave way to night and night once again turned into day.

The members of the Coast Guard were not only the ones that wore down as the oil spill response operation continued unabated. The heretofore white patrol vessels became covered with the stench of the noxious black oil.

Many personal stories emerged during this around the clock cleanup effort. These included a father who found himself unable to attend his daughter's first birthday party, which is a very special occasion for Korean families, and a newly married woman who found herself having to go back to work as soon as she returned from her honeymoon. Patrol Officer Kim Hee-jeong recalls, "With little other choice but to focus my energies on the task at hand in the sea for 15 successive days, the best I could do for my six-year daughter who had taken ill with a high fever and was crying out for her mom was to try and console her over the phone."

The oil spill response operation began in earnest the next day on December 8 when the waves had died down somewhat. Oil dispersants were thrown into the sea in order to stop the oil from spreading. Local residents in small fishing vessels and members of the Coast Guard in patrol vessels busied themselves collecting the oil balls that had formed using landing nets and absorption sheets hung from long poles. The volatile compounds of the crude oil having by now disappeared, these volunteers actively searched for the ball-shaped oil dregs floating on the sea as their little boats swayed in the winter sea like a kite caught in crosswinds. The sight of these individuals risking their very lives to collect these oil balls is one that will not soon be forgotten. This seemingly momentary task left the brows of these local residents and members of the Coast Guard sopping with sweat.

Protect Garorim and Cheonsu Bays

Brought in by the high tide, enormous black waves crashed into the shore as scores of helping hands courageously continued to do their best to repel this ominous, unwelcome monster.

The area in which the oil spill occurred had long been known as one of the cleanest and most pristine in Korea. Cheonsu Bay, the largest repository for migratory birds, is located in this area. The fact that migratory birds regard this area as a haven is a clear indication of its status as a premium fishing ground. Moreover, this fishing ground is also home to some of the most pristine beaches in Korea. The area's clean environment and high conservation value has resulted in it being designated as the only Coastal National Park in Korea. Thus, the situation at that time could be likened to the Titanic coming aground in an unsoiled area while carrying a cargo that consisted not of people, but rather of venomous black ooze. As a result, the entire nation joined hands with the local residents to prevent these thick films of oil from impeding on this immaculate area. Invoking superhuman strength, they effectively proclaimed war on the sea.

Cheonsu Bay consists of a 284.5 kilometers long ria coast. For its part, the West Sea is characterized by a significant gap between its ebbs and flows that results in bringing large amounts of water into the coast during high tide and in large tidelands becoming evident during low tide. Cheonsu Bay's natural environment has resulted in it becoming home to some 4 million migratory birds. The clean sea that surrounds it has also made it possible for fishermen to establish fish farms in the area. As such, this area has long been one in which humans, birds, and the living organisms found in the sea have harmoniously coexisted. Are Heaven and Hell as close to one another as the palm and the back of one's hand? For when the oil spill first flowed into the bay after high tide it was as if the whole area had become a gigantic oil pool. Powerless to do anything else but take note of the numerous lives that had been needlessly asphyxiated, local residents found themselves stuck in a nightmare from which they could not wake up.



It was then that the operation to safeguard Cheonsu Bay began in earnest. Soon initial lines of defense were being prepared. The last line of defense consisted of many a layered oil fence erected at the entrance to the bay. A shortage of rope forced the local residents to untie the ropes used to anchor their fishing boats. Vessels that regularly hauled fishing nets were now pulling a heavy oil fence. The Coast Guard's point man for the oil spill response Kim Jong-ho recalls, "The tide started to come in while we were trying to put up the oil fence. Although there were 20 of us trying to put up the fence, our efforts proved futile in the face of the fierce waves that descended on us. It was at that moment that we suddenly saw local vessels from fishing farms appear on the scene. Despite their best efforts to help us by placing themselves in the middle of the fence to stop it from collapsing onto itself, we barely managed to ward off the waves."

This epic struggle on the part of local residents, soldiers, and members of the Coast Guard against the waves resulted in shielding Garorim Bay and Cheonsu Bay from the massive oil film that loomed. Taean may never have been restored to its original hue had the oil film spread to these areas blessed with a breathtaking natural environment. To defend the natural environment of Taean, an oil fence that spanned some 48 kilometers had been installed by the end of March 2008.



The miracle of white sands on Mallipo Beach

All at once, the growing wave of volunteers seemed to begin to check the black waves, and the sand on the beach started to return to its natural silvery hue.

Heaven helps those who help themselves. Having become aware of the heroic struggle being waged by local residents, soldiers, and members of the Coast Guard, citizens from all over the country began to make their way towards the sea.

In many cases, the people who came to this disaster area to help did so by taking a leave of absence from work, postponing agricultural chores, temporarily closing down restaurants, or taking days off from school. Upon hearing the news regarding the lack of oil cleanup equipment and facilities, people began to appear on the scene with buckets and dustpans. On-site clinics were established. On December 27th alone, 20 days after the original accident, 51,055 volunteers came to help. Excluding the New Year's Day, an important holiday, an average of 11,446 people visited the affected area on a daily basis.



These volunteers set about removing the oil from the sea using buckets and dustpans. At the beginning, these efforts seemed to be laughable. It was like hitting a rock with eggs. However, the color of the shore began to change as the number of volunteer increased and a large human chain was formed. Much like dawn eventually replaces the deepest darkest of nights, so too did the black waves begin to disappear. The waves along one of the West Coast's most popular destinations, Mallipo Beach, gradually began to return to their natural blue. The smell of oil all but disappeared. This extraordinary turn of event has since become known as the 'Miracle of Mallipo Beach.'

This miracle proved to be just the beginning. Soon, the volunteers who had performed magic at Mallipo Beach began to spread out to other beaches such as Cheollipo, Baengnipo, and Simnipo.

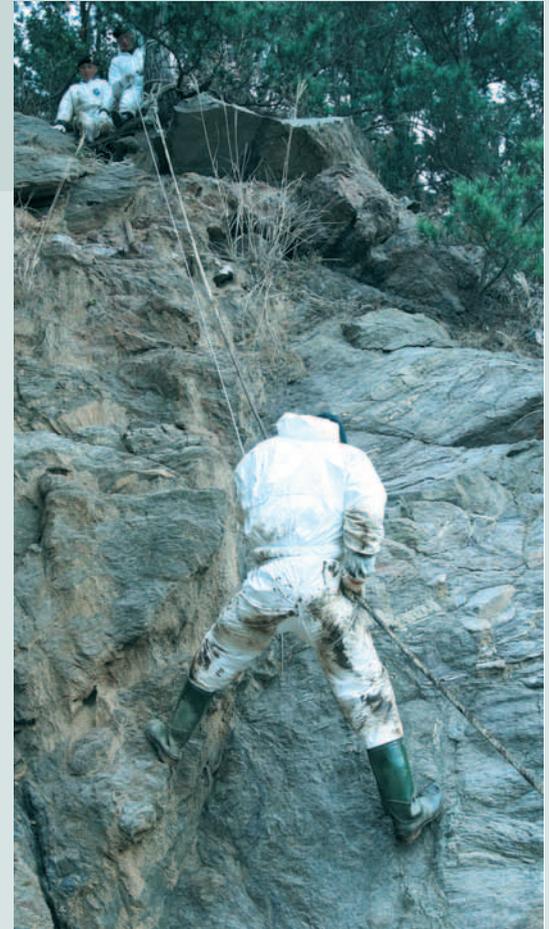
These same volunteers who had struggled against the waves were now sitting down on cold rocks, stones, and sand made worse by the frigid sea winds that inevitably emerge in the middle of the winter. Using banner cloth, T-shirts, towels, and cloth diapers donated from all corners of the nation, the volunteers proceeded to lovingly wash the gravel and pebbles along the shore like one washes a baby. Placed in their gentle hands, these pebbles handled as if they were fragile eggs soon regained their pristine state. As the oil accumulated on the volunteers' clothes, gloves, and boots, the coastal area gradually began to regain its original features. The sweat and tears displayed by these volunteers instilled local residents with the willingness and strength needed to pick up the pieces and rebuild their lives.



The Marine Corps lands on uninhabited islands and the special warfare unit on oil-soaked cliffs

A mere 15 days after this dreadful incident, the efforts to cleanup the coastal area already appeared to be yielding some results. From that point onwards, volunteers began to increasingly turn their attention to the nearby islands. Cruise ships began to ferry volunteers armed with masks and protective clothing to and from these islands. Soon, these islands that had been marooned by oil would also begin to regain their original colors.

The task of clearing hard-to-reach uninhabited islands was put in the hands of the military. Having anchored their vessels in the middle of the sea, the Marine Corps proceeded to shed their military uniforms in favor of protective clothing and to replace their weapons with absorption sheets. Using armored vehicles and small inflatable boats, they proceeded to disembark on the shores of these uninhabited islands. As they came ashore on these islands long devoid of any human activity, the marines found themselves face to face with significant amounts of crude oil that had to be removed.





The members of the Special Warfare Command who were put in charge of cleaning up the cliffs along the coast descended on them as if they landed in enemy territory. These brave soldiers proved to have hands akin to those of King Midas, indeed. Soon, the rocks on higher places that had been ensnared by oil dregs began to breathe once again.



Although the heavy concentration of oil caused the air to be filled with high levels of impurities and his forces had to exert tremendous energy to cleanup the oil, Lieutenant Chung Kwang-hoon of the Special Warfare Command regarded this hard work to be par for the course for the military, “who else but our men and women in uniform could swoop in and do the job in places where machines and volunteers could not.”

International specialists praise Korean people's recovery effort

After having looked around the cleanup site Yukio Yoden of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Northeast Asia Division, who had experienced firsthand the damages wrought by a heavy oil spill in January 1997, stated that, "Korea has done in a week what it would normally take 1- 2 months to do." Shortly after this incident occurred, the Korean government asked other countries which had suffered similar incidents in the past to lend a helping hand. The UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), EU (European Union), and the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) answered this call by dispatching a joint research team. Meanwhile, the United States sent an oil spill response team consisting of specialists from the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Having experienced similar incidents, Japan was quick to dispatch specialists from the Japanese Coast Guard and Maritime Disaster Prevention Center (MDPC).





Upon arrival, all of these individuals were surprised not only by the response measures which the government had put in place, but by the sheer scope of the Korean people's participation in this recovery effort. Confronted with the blazing speed of the cleanup process in the Taean area, these individuals had no other choice but to reach the conclusion that Korea was in the midst of bringing about an unprecedented miracle. To this end, Vladimir Sakharov of the UNEP stated, "Korea does not have much to improve its Emergency Response System...The outstanding nature of Korea's equipment and response strategy actually has me looking for Korean specialists to help out our international organization."

Taean, the treasure of Korea's West Sea

Taean Coastal National Park is widely regarded as the most beautiful coastal resort along Korea's West Coast. This national park consists of 130 islands grouped around the area dominated by Anmyeon Island and Taean. This is an area of soft sandy beaches spreading out as far as the eye can see. The presence of rocks carved out by waves for hundreds of millions of years add much to this breathtaking landscape. The area is home to famous beaches such as Mallipo and Kkotji. Boasting not only seemingly endless white sand but also a 430 hectares of natural forest populated by century old pine trees, Anmyeon Island is an area to which people flock to enjoy some leisure time by the sea or in the forest. Cheonsu Bay, one of the most popular sites for migratory birds, is also located in this area. The sight of countless birds looking almost as if they were embroidered in the sky is all too common.





SECTION

2

Talk of Hope Emerges Finally

Stories of heroes who helped clear up the black despair of Taaan abound...

Operation 'Love and Sharing'...One million others from all over the nation have come together as one to create a miracle...Magical human waves...

These waves of volunteers continue to wash away Taaan's anguish.



People are infected by “love viruses;” they must have a special gene inside

Ms Choi Min-ji (26) runs a piano school in Seoul. She first visited Taeon on January 11th, 2008, in the dead of winter. She had originally planned to stay only a few days. She had just wanted to ease her conscience and express her sympathy and solidarity with nature and the residents of Taeon. In the end, she wound up staying in Taeon for almost 40 days. By the time she got back home in March the flowers had started to bloom.

Covering her face with a hat and mask, day after day she went about removing black oil tar. At night, she would plop her weary body down on the floor of a 25,000-won (US\$25)-a-day inn. She regularly found herself getting nauseous from the smell of the oil that drenched the coastal area. The severe winds emanating from the sea caused her to catch a nasty cold. Nevertheless, she never failed to get up with the sun and head off to the site. Ms Choi said, “I found myself unable to go back home. With so much black oil everywhere, I simply could not bring myself to leave Taeon.” While her heart was filled with elation at the

slightest hint that the waters were becoming clearer, she also developed a healthy hatred for the oil floating around in the water.

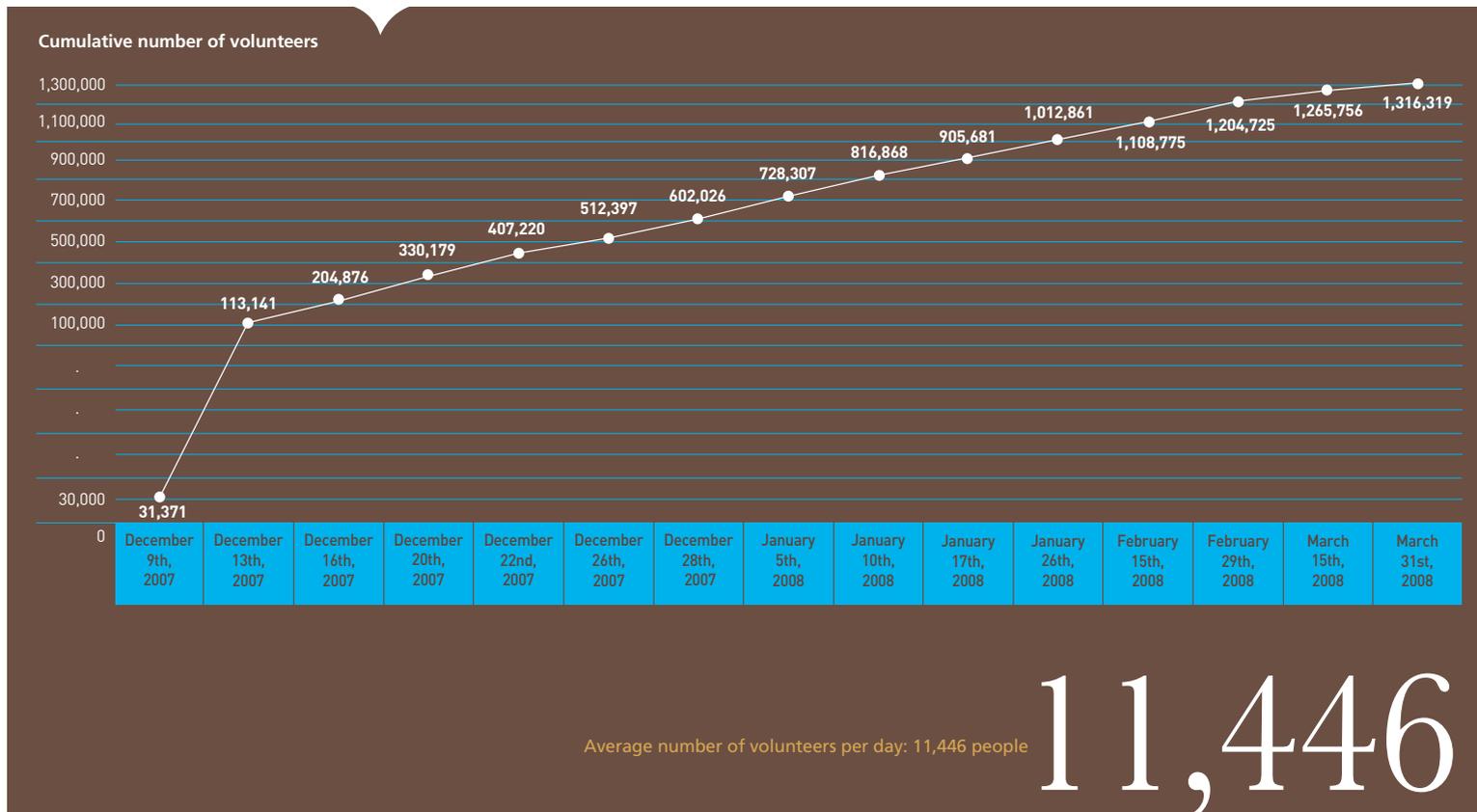
The actors who created this ‘1 million volunteer miracle’ are common people like Ms Choi. Do Koreans have a special ‘gene’ embedded in them that impels them to pool their strength in times of need? One example of this phenomenon is the movement to collect gold that surfaced during the foreign exchange crisis of 1997. Although no public organization asked them to do so, the people banded together and took out the gold they had squirreled away in a deep place of their chest drawers and gave to their government so that it may sell it overseas for dollars in a dangerously short supply domestically. Their desire to overcome the national crisis was so strong that many of them donated their most precious personal possessions like gold wedding bands and rings as well as their children’s first birthday gold rings.



During the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, millions of citizens came together to create the so-called 'Red Devils' phenomenon. Day after day, hundreds of thousands of these passionate supporters of Korea's National Soccer Team showcased their advanced civic spirit by making sure not to leave any garbage behind at the Seoul City Hall Plaza, where they had gathered to cheer on their team. This incredible energy from fans was a major driving force behind the Korean soccer squad's

advancing to the World Cup semifinals, and this despite the fact that they had only been ranked at 46th internationally by FIFA as it went onto the tournament.

People who use crises as opportunities... People who share joyous moments with others... These 'special common people' all made their way toward Taean.







OPERATION 'LOVE AND SHARING'

“Taeon Christmas” attracts people of all religions and backgrounds

This effort extended well beyond particular religions or religious groups. Buddhist monks and Christian clergymen sat down together with leaders and laypeople of other religious groups to clean up the oil tar. One of them stated, “Washing off this oil tar is like cleansing our hearts and minds.” Thus, this effort to restore nature in many ways also helped people to free their minds from everyday concerns.

Protestants, Buddhists, and Catholics came together at the site of this disaster to prove the power of ‘love and community service.’ For instance, the Jesus-Loving Society Volunteer Group as well as the Caritas Catholic Volunteer Group operated the so-called ‘Love Food Truck’ providing free meals to volunteers. During the 2007 Christmas season, monks from Beopjusa Temple temporarily abandoned their Buddhist robes and donned protective garb. Thus ‘Taeon Christmas’ became a special occasion to celebrate in their own way to both believers and non-believers alike.





OPERATION 'LOVE AND SHARING'



Lee Jeong-bok (18, Gyeongbok High School, Seoul) has a babyish face and short hair. He belonged to one of the many activist groups that came to Taean as soon as they heard about the oil spill.

"I have always been interested in environmental issues. In fact, I have even decided to major in environmental studies in university. The urgent need to cleanup the oil that was spilt into the sea spurred me participating in volunteer activities.. I plan on learning more about environmental pollution when I enter university."

University students have also descended upon Taean in droves. Students from one university's department of safety & environmental prevention arrived on the scene in Taean as soon as they could, even taking their final exams on their buses so as to join in the cleanup activities quickly. Students from medical schools and nursing colleges became modern-day "Doctor Zhivagos" and "Florence Nightingales" who took care of local residents and volunteers affected by the noxious smell of oil. Meanwhile, students who majored in advertising used various innovative methods to spearhead a campaign to 'Go MT on the West Coast.' This younger generation is very passionate about community service. They engaged in their volunteer activities as if they were their favorite hobby.



Young people engage
in community service as
if it is their hobby

<Interview> A very special honeymoon...
"We had our honeymoon in Tae'an"

Park Se-young (34, a music teacher at Ilsandong High School) and Yun Ki-ja (32, a Korean language teacher at Shinil Middle School) are a very special newlywed couple who decided to go to Tae'an for their honeymoon last winter.

"We wanted to come to Tae'an as soon as we heard about what had happened. However, our duties as teachers and the fact that we were in the midst of preparing for our wedding forced us to delay our trip. We decided to go to Tae'an on our honeymoon. It seemed to be a good idea to use the funds set aside for our honeymoon in Tae'an." This remarkable couple thus spent what was supposed to be the happiest moment of their lives trying to ease their neighbors' pain.





Taeon becomes “the place” to hold year-end parties for corporate volunteers; they donate part of party funds to the victims

“Have you ever heard about oil cleaning year-end party? We came to Taeon with a happy heart to do just that. What a way to ring out the old and ring in the new! This year’s party is going to be more meaningful and give more hopes for the New Year than any other in the past. It sure beats the mundane, hackneyed drinking party,” said a young company worker participating in the clean-up work.

Toward the end of 2007, many company-sponsored volunteer workers arrived in the Taeon area. During a break time from the clean-up work, a volunteer belonging to a group from a steel company casually suggested the idea of throwing a year-end party on the site. Everyone including his manager liked the idea. So one evening, they found an old restaurant in Mallipo Beach that had all but been deserted after the disaster hit. Somehow they managed to find abalone, sea cucumber and common octopus and feasted on them. They also donated to the Taeon County government approximately 10 million won (\$10,000) they saved from their company’s year-end party fund plus their own individual contributions to help revitalize the ruined local economy.



“Have some cookies”

Seo Jeong-ha (31) suffers from a psychological disorder. Along with other members of the Hanwultari, a social welfare facility in Daejeon, Seo visited Taeon on February 28th, 2008 to deliver some 500 cookies they had baked the night before to the residents of Taeon.

Park Jong-hak (60), who is a visually impaired massage expert, visited Taeon on January 9th, 2008. Rather than heading for the sea, Park decided to provide local residents with massage services. “I could feel the cruel reality which these residents must live with every day as I massaged their bodies with my hands. I hope that the hearts of these residents were every so slightly alleviated while they were receiving the massage services.”

With cookies acting as a medium, Seo and his friends conveyed the contents of their hearts to the people of Taeon. Meanwhile, Park’s massage services provided local residents with a much needed, although fleeting, respite.



Disabilities don't count when it comes to serving the community



OPERATION 'LOVE AND SHARING'







Hello
عليكم السلام .
こんにちは。
“Taeon”

On December 30th, 2007, an unexpected visitor came to the Taeon County Office. Takashi Saito (veterinarian) of Sapporo, Japan said, “I saw the birds covered with oil on TV. I came from Japan to help Korea heal its wounds.”

Other foreign volunteers besides Takashi Saito also visited the Taeon area during this trying period. The sense of sacrifice and volunteerism exhibited by such individuals was one which went beyond borders and nationalities and that contributed greatly to the rapid restoration to its original state of the sea around Taeon.



One thousand pieces of origami sent by Japanese students

On December 30th, 2007, a package sent by Japanese students residing in Seoul arrived at the Taeon County Office. In the box were many pieces of folded-paper cranes, including one in the shape of the Taeon peninsula created using three different colors. The letter stated, “Well aware of the seriousness of the situation, we decided to do something. Although it will take a long time and much suffering before the sea is restored to its previous pristine state, we urge you not to give up or get frustrated. Keep your chins up. We are there with you in spirit.”



In December 2007, a photo of a young person with a hat pulled down over his eyes concentrating on removing oil tar from rocks adorned the show business section of domestic and international newspapers. This was none other than 'Rain,' a top Korean singer who has gone on to become an actor in Hollywood. Upon hearing what had occurred, Rain immediately left the United States and flew to Taeon.

Kim Jang-hoon, whose zest for volunteerism has earned him the nickname 'the donation angel of Korea', provided 400 million won (US\$ 400,000) for buses, meals, and cleanup equipment for volunteers.

To celebrate their 1st wedding anniversary, Actress Mun So-ri, who received an award for best young actor during the 59th Venice International Film Festival, came to Taeon to conduct volunteer activities with her film director husband. Other notable figures who took part in the cleanup efforts included the members of the board of the Korea Football Association (KFA), as well as famous athletes such as Hwang Young-jo, a marathoner who won Olympic gold in Barcelona in 1992, swimmer Choe Yun-hee who has been nicknamed the 'mermaid of Asia,' and Jang Yun-chang, the main force behind Korean volleyball. The warmth and compassion showed by these famous individuals truly went a long way towards consoling the heavy hearts of the local residents.



Stars of
entertainment
world also join
“Revive Taeon”
campaign





Ulleungdo *ajimae* who came from afar say that it is their turn to help

One day a group of women showed up in Taeon. The swift and effortless way they handled the stones and rocks looked as if they were cleaning their living floors. They were '*ajimae*' (a term which means 'married women' in the local dialect), who had come from Ulleungdo island located in Korea's East Sea. A strong sense of sympathy had compelled these women to drive ten hours to help out their compatriots in the West Sea. In 2003 and 2005, the brunt of the powerful typhoons Maemi and Nabi had hit the sparsely populated island of Ulleungdo head on. During the periods of immense hardships that followed, many people donated money and their time to help the people of Ulleungdo. These women explained that they had come to Taeon to repay the kindness that had been shown them during the time of hardship.

Citizens of Yeosu City in Jeonnam Province, who in 1995 had gone through similar suffering as a result of a crash involving a boat called the Sea Prince that caused a massive oil spill in the area, also visited Taeon to repay the kindness that they had received some 10 years before. This kind of sympathy seemed to come naturally to the people who make their living from the sea.





The “love viruses” continue to spread

As of the end of March 2008, a total of 1,316,319 volunteers had visited Taean in the aftermath of this dreadful incident. Assigning a value of 1 meter to each volunteer, this number would be enough to build approximately 4,000 human towers as high as Paris' Eiffel Tower.

The number of volunteers was still climbing. The area continued to draw a steady stream of volunteers. For two months, the Republic of Korea National Red Cross operated nine food trucks and provided meals for 96,000 volunteers. Some were cleaning up the last oil stains. Some were providing local residents with medical and legal services. Others were transporting trucks full of food and beverages to be donated. Still other individuals were using donations to show their compassion.





Setting Sail with New Hope

Taan is rising again and smile returns

SECTION

3

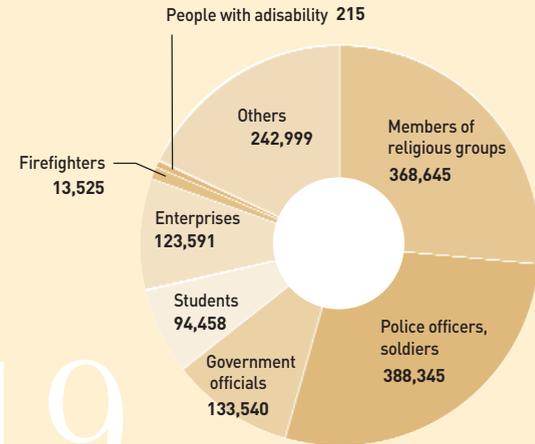


On the morning of February 5th, 2008, or two days before the lunar New Year's Day holiday, local residents gathered on the shores of Mallipo Beach. Their attire that day was out of the ordinary. It was not only the area's senior residents who came to the beach that day, but also their children and grandchildren who lived in other areas. Postponing preparations for the lunar New Year's Day feast, they had gathered to express their appreciation to the volunteers. In turn, the residents bowed before waves and shores that had at last regained their original colors.

The message that the residents wanted to send that day was like the following: "The toil and sweat of the volunteers who have descended in droves on Taean County has resulted in the city gradually recovering its natural beauty. We pledge to do our utmost to restore this area to its past glory, and to turn it into a world-class resort where all of these valiant volunteers can come and relax."

Damaged area (Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs)

- Damaged coastline: 1,267.5 kilometers
- Damaged area: 57,582 hectares
- Affected households: 62,218 families



Number of volunteers that visited Taean as of March 31st, 2008:

1,316,319



The crude oil that oozed into the Taean area in which the majority of the residents make their living from fishing and tourism had the effect of throwing all of the area's residents into unemployment. Fishing vessels stopped moving and fish farms were closed down. Residents whose livelihood depended on catching shellfish and common octopus in the tidelands instantly found themselves out of work.

However, the gradual return of the sea and beaches to their original state achieved through the unbreakable spirit of volunteers has since helped to restore hope amongst local residents. Some 50 days after the incident occurred, the first pleasure cruise returned to Taean Coastal National Park. Fishing activities restarted four months after the disaster struck. The outcome of the cleanup activities has been nothing short of a miracle. Assessments of pollution levels in the area have revealed that half of beaches in the Taean area could be reopened to the public in the summer of 2008.

Donations, etc

(Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs)

- Donations: 38,012,940,000 won or US\$38 million (36,251,940,000 won for Chungnam Province and 1,761,000,000 won for Jeonnam Province)
- Materials: 2,092,600 items
29,925 boxes of ramen, 103,390 cartons of milk, 133,120 loaves of bread

Family stabilization fund

(Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs)

- Overall fund: 109,169,000,000 won or US\$109million
Subject households: 45,557 families (average 2,396,300 won or US\$ 2,400 per family)
- Fund sources: 76,800,000,000 won or US\$ 77 million from the government, 17,369,000,000 won or US\$ 17.4 million from national donations, 15,000,000,000 won or US\$ 15 million from the Chungnam Provincial Government
91,330,000,000 won or US\$ 91.3 million for Chungnam Province, 37,157 families (Average 2,458,000 won or US\$ 2,500)
17,839,000,000 won or US\$ 17.8 million for Jeonnam Province, 8,400 families (average 2,123,700 won or US\$ 2,120)

38,012,940,000

Donations: 38,012,940,000 won or US\$38 million (36,251,940,000 won for Chungnam Province and 1,761,000,000 won for Jeonnam Province)







The willingness to stand up once again displayed by these local residents has much to do with the outreached hands and wave of emotions brought forward by the 1 million volunteers who descended on the area to restore it to its natural state. In the winter of 2007 in Taean, these volunteers responded successfully to a major 21st century disaster using Iron Age tools. They endured the noxious smell of oil, fought against heavy waves, and stood up to the bitterest of colds. These were people who were infected by “love viruses” and “viruses of sharing” that led them to help shoulder the sadness, pain, and agony of the residents of this afflicted area. The media has described the people’s achievements as “One Million Volunteers’ Miracle.”

Mother Theresa once said to the effect: We may feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But what if we do not add that one drop of water—Will there be any water left for humanity?

Medical staff: **5,446**

Equipment mobilized (Korea Coast Guard)

Vessels	Helicopters	Heavy equipment			
		Subtotal	Cranes	Washers	Others (tractors, etc)
17,098	294	17,422	2,873	4,594	9,955

Collection of waste (Korea Coast Guard)

Total		Sea		Land	
Waste oil (kl)	Wastes from oil absorption (ton)	Waste oil (kl)	Wastes from oil absorption (ton)	Waste oil (kl)	Wastes from oil absorption (ton)
4,175	30,769	2,360	1,034	1,815	29,735

On-site medical care (Taean County Office)

- Medical staff: 5,446 (1,761 doctors/ 3,685 nurses)
- Number of patients treated: 71,404 (headaches and colds: 46,461/ skin problems: 3,370/ treatment of minor injuries: 814)





A Taean that is once again capable of standing on its feet...





the ability to smile returns
tears...struggles...miracle...elation

HEBEI SPIRIT



Massive Oil Spill off Korea's West Coast Cleaned Up in Record Time

tears...struggles...miracle...elation

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