



OUTWARD BOUND  
VIETNAM

# NEWSLETTER

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

I am excited to join Outward Bound Vietnam (OBV) as the new Executive Director. On behalf of my new colleagues, I am pleased to share the latest events at OBV. Our latest batch of trainee instructors graduated in June this year. Our instructors are full-time professionals who undergo intensive training to be qualified to conduct OBV programmes safely. Instructors must employ a range of engagement styles and use various soft-skills techniques to interact with people from diverse ages and backgrounds to achieve outdoor education outcomes. I wish the latest batch of graduands every success in their journey as Outward Bound Instructors! Our programmes have also picked up pace post-pandemic, and we are getting more enquiries from clients and partners for outdoor adventure education opportunities with OBV. We have taken the opportunity to build extensive partnerships with educational institutions like the Republic Polytechnic of Singapore (RP) and Quy Nhon University for student engagement opportunities. We recently signed an MOU with RP that affirms our partnership in matters related to outdoor education excellence and research. In fact, OBV hosted 4 students from the Diploma in Outdoor and Adventure Learning course in RP who will be completing their 5-month internship with us this August. Furthermore, we deepened our partnership with Outward Bound Singapore through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for potential programme opportunities and collaborations. Finally, I am pleased to announce that OBV was awarded the Association of Experiential Education (AEE) accreditation in April this year – which recognises that our outdoor education programme design and pedagogies conform to the exacting standards of the AEE. I must thank my predecessor Aaron Funnell for his hard work leading the team on this front for this milestone achievement.

A piece of trivia! I was in Vietnam in 2015 as part of a team from Singapore that helped conceive the possibility of setting up an Outward Bound School in Vietnam. Never did I expect that I would return about 8 years later to serve OBV in a senior management role. I have received a warm welcome from OBV's Governance Council, Risk Management Committee, Patron, and all staff I have met. In my 2 months here, I am impressed by our staff's dedication, passion, and the quality of work done - but there is more work ahead of us. I hope to do my part in leading OBV to new heights (pun intended!) to bring Outward Bound programmes to benefit more youths and young adults in Vietnam and around the region through strategic collaborations. OBV should be in the forefront of this! I look forward to meeting and working with all of you!

Elamaaran Balakrishnan  
*Executive Director*



## Introduction of OBV's new Executive Director

Since 1 June 2023, Outward Bound Vietnam (OBV) has welcomed our new Executive Director, Elamaaran Balakrishnan. He is seconded to OBV for 2 years from the National Youth Council of Singapore. Elamaaran joins us with an impressive background of over 20 years of experience in outdoor adventure and experiential education. He is an outdoor enthusiast, advocate, practitioner, and administrator. He holds a Master's degree (Distinction) in Outdoor and Environmental Education from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.



*OBV Executive Director – Elamaaran on top of an OBV's natural rock-climbing site at OBV's Binh Dinh Campus*

Elamaaran is no stranger to OBV - he has throughout the years contributed to the initial development of OBV as well as played supportive roles in various initiatives of our Group, including hosting many corporate visits for Vietnamese officials at Outward Bound Singapore (OBS).

Elamaaran has held a range of executive roles throughout his professional career in various Singapore public sector agencies. He was Director of Operations and Chief Instructor at OBS; his most recent role prior to being seconded to OBV was as Director of Programmes and Partnerships & Chief Training Consultant. Cumulatively, Elamaaran's experience in this sector and his leadership will help charter OBV's next phase of growth.

As Executive Director, he is excited to work on expanding OBV's strategic, risk management & operational capabilities and further our mission of providing meaningful, impactful outdoor experiential learning opportunities for youth and adults.



*Elamaaran in Quy Nhon in 2015 as part of the team from OBS that helped set up an OBV school.*

## Achievement and Engagement

### Accreditation by Association of Experiential Education

On 19 April 2023, Outward Bound Vietnam (OBV) received the Adventure Programme Certificate of Accreditation from the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), a prestigious recognition for our experiential learning programmes.

AEE is a nonprofit professional membership association for experiential education with more than 1,700 members from more than 25 countries. The AEE Adventure Programme Accreditation requires a rigorous evaluation process, conducted by independent reviewers, to verify an organisation's ability to adhere to the highest standards in experiential adventure programme quality and safety. By undergoing this strict assessment, OBV has demonstrated our capability and commitment to strive for international standards in our training quality, safety, risk management, and ethical practices. This achievement also highlights OBV as the first adventure programme provider in Vietnam and one of a few in Asia with this accreditation.



### Collaboration with Outward Bound Singapore

On 20 March 2023, OBV strengthened our long-term partnership with OBS through the signing of a MOU, which sets out the collaboration framework for the organisation to co-conduct outdoor adventure activities and expeditions in Vietnam. The ceremony was graced by Patron of OBV – Mr. Ricky, Executive Director of OBS – Mr. Nicholas Conceicao, together with representatives and staff. OBV hopes to work together with OBS approach to expand its programme offerings to develop character, leadership, and citizenry in youths through our rugged outdoor terrain.



*MOU Signing Ceremony between OBV and OBS, 20 March 2023*

## Achievement and Engagement

As part of our strategic partnership efforts, a group of OBS delegates visited OBV Ha Long and OBV Binh Dinh from 16 to 22 July to see the feasibility of conducting a joint programme in Vietnam. The trip also serves as an initial affirmation of OBV's readiness and capability to potentially host participants from Singapore soon.



*Exploring the caves of Ha Long*

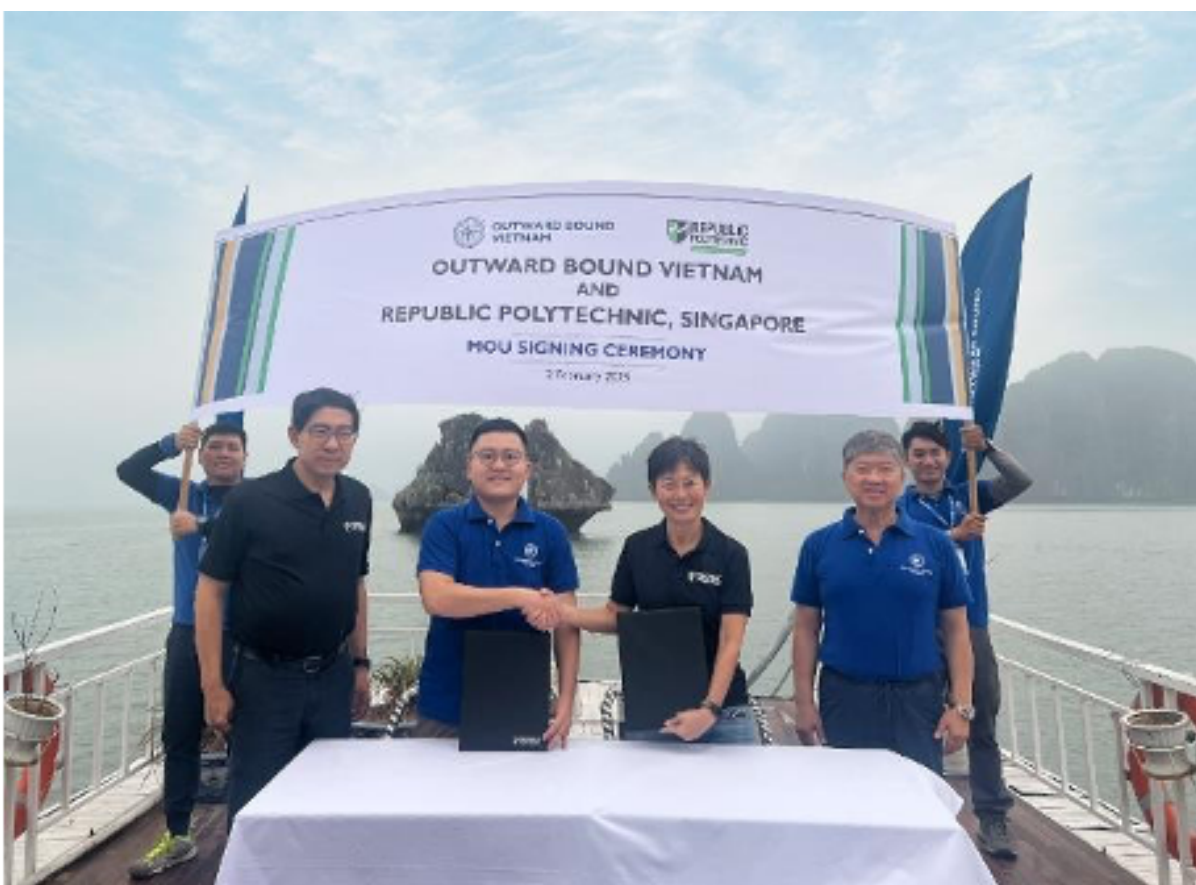


*OBS team visiting OBV sites for due diligence purpose, 16 – 22 July 2023*

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Signing between Outward Bound Vietnam (OBV) and Republic Polytechnic (RP), Singapore**

On 2 February 2023, OBV expanded our long-term relationship with Republic Polytechnic (RP), an institute of higher learning in Singapore, by officially signing an MOU in Ha Long Bay, Vietnam. The event was graced by the presence of Mr. Ricky Tan – Patron of OBV, Mr. Yeo Li Pheow – The then Principal/CEO of RP, and the management teams of the two organisations.

The strategic collaboration agreement demonstrates both parties' aim to promote the cooperative creation and implementation of best practices, research, and technology in areas that will increase and extend knowledge and boundaries in outdoor education and related domains. This strong commitment from both sides promises to support and contribute to youth exchange and human capital development in both Vietnam and Singapore.



*MOU Signing Ceremony between OBV and RP, February 2023*

## Achievement and Engagement

### Quy Nhon University Job Fair

On 20 May 2023, Outward Bound Vietnam team had the pleasure of attending the Quy Nhon University (QNU) Job Fair 2023. As a proud long-standing partner of QNU, we are committed to providing employment opportunities for the young generation of the city as well as Binh Dinh province. Our team had a great time meeting and discussing the exciting future at OBV with QNU students.

We would like to express our gratitude to QNU for hosting a successful event as well as those who stopped by our booth. Over the years, OBV and QNU have been in strong partnership, with us not only recruiting their graduates as our instructor trainees but also providing numerous scholarships to QNU's underprivileged students. OBV prides ourselves in our relentless efforts to contribute to the sustainable human capital development of the province in particular and Vietnam in general.



*OBV Team attending Quy Nhon University Job Fair, May 2023*

### AEE Conference

From 13 – 15 June 2023, as an AEE member, OBV had the honour of sponsoring and participating in the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference (APRC) 2023 organised by AEE in collaboration with Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS). The conference's focus on Sustainability and Inclusivity in Experiential Education aligns with our goal to provide inclusive and sustainable experiential education programs to the young generation in Vietnam. We were delighted to exchange knowledge and experiences with other professionals in the field and are looking forward to incorporating our learning into our programmes.



*OBV Team at the inaugural AEE Asia Pacific Region Conference 2023*

## Staffing Update

### OBS - OBV Collaboration

Two OBV staff were among the selected participants to be part of the March 2023 21-Day Classic Course at OBS. This is a fully immersive programme where participants explore various expeditionary methods ranging from hiking, sea-kayaking, and Sailing. The course enabled the exchange of learnings and cultural perspective of Outdoor Instructors from Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia (Lumut), Malaysia (Sabah), and Himalayas. The learning was clearly evident through the experience shared from all the participants and trainers as well.



*Mai Cao Dam & Nguyen Cao Thang of OBV attending 21-Day Classic Course at OBS, March 2023*

### New Training School Graduation

It is with great joy to announce the newest operational members of OBV's Instructor Training School. Five Instructor Trainees have been through rigorous training and work-exposure to be fully equipped with the necessary skills as an Outdoor Instructor. Technical skills such as hiking, wall-climbing and abseiling are complimented with facilitation and instructional skill to assist clients towards attaining a wholistic Outward Bound experience during programs. Each with their unique personality brought together by their common passion to serve an eager youth community of Vietnam, to develop the outdoor industry through personal pursuits and contribute to the growth of OBV.



*OBV's latest batch of instructor trainees graduate (from left to right): Le Trong Hoai, Dang Quang Phu, Nguyen Son Ca, Tran Son Bach, Nguyen Gia Huy*

# Staffing Update

## Staff Training

Exploring Local sites such as the Cham Towers, Quy Nhon Science Centre, and collaborative work with Nga Foundation to deliver environmental and service-focused projects were among the highlights and perk of staff trainings in the outdoor environment rich in learning values.



*Sit on top Kayak personal skills training*



*Indoor abseil and rockwall training*

Staff in Ha Long has been maximising their time in the blistering summer period with skills development and base projects to enhance both the site and skills, giving meaning to the saying Form and Function.

Developing base activities for clients who are due to arrive at the turn of the season while maintaining currency in activities such as abseiling and caving. An exciting new challenge awaits participants in Ha Long, in the form of what has been aptly named Lightning Stream. These activities are made possible with on-going collaboration and support from the local land-owners.



*Casualty Evacuation training @ Lightning Stream*



*Water Proficiency and Lifesaving training*

## Staffing Update

### Interns from Republic Polytechnic (Singapore)

Outward Bound Vietnam recently welcomed 4 talented interns from Republic Polytechnic (Singapore)'s Diploma in Outdoor and Adventure Learning program. These interns spent an exhilarating 5 months interning with OBV Binh Dinh, from March to August 2023, where they supported programme participants, managed daily administration, camp operations, and assisted lead instructors in the field.

During their internship, the interns tackled a variety of key projects, including developing an adventure quest, reviewing training policy manuals, maintaining staff competency records, tracking weekly vehicle movement, and designing fire preparedness sessions.

One of the most memorable aspects of their experience was the experimentation with new approaches and tackling the unique terrains found in Vietnam.



*Interns setting up the outdoor abseil site*



*RP interns bringing participants on expedition*



*Interns from Republic Polytechnic (from left to right): Xavier Lim, Muhammad Aqmal, Evelyn Ong, Muhammad Syukri Dzulhismas*

“We would like to thank the people in OBV who had been supporting us since Day 1 and guiding us throughout ensuring that we are well taken care of and experiencing what it is like working in an Outward Bound organisation in Vietnam”.



## Course Summary

Apart from serving students from KinderWorld International Group of schools, which has been our strategic client since OBV's early years, in these recent months, OBV has also welcomed many clients from other locals and international schools as well as corporate sectors to our beautiful basecamps in Quy Nhon and Ha Long.

### The Dewey Schools (TDS)

From 14 to 24 March 2023, more than 60 students from The Dewey Schools participated in OBV courses in Binh Dinh. The programme focused on the development of their communication skills and identified their strengths and weaknesses. Students also learned to how to work together as a team to overcome challenges. Additionally, activities in nature were introduced through the Leave No Trace ethics, a set of principles promoting minimum impact camping in the outdoors.

After practicing these positive behaviours in nature, the students became Leave No Trace ambassadors.



*OBV Certificate Awarding Ceremony for TDS students*

### The Olympia School

In the first quarter of 2023, more than 170 students from The Olympia School attended our three-day Outward Bound experience, which inspired students to set clear intentions behind their actions and helped them to identify, express and act on feedback from their peers.

Through a variety of team initiatives and first aid scenarios, the dynamics of the group and their ability to communicate with one another were tested and reflected upon to draw out meaningful learning. In engaging with the natural environment and with people of varying backgrounds, students identified and recognised the diversity of the world and understood how individual contributions impact the wider community. They had the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way at a local Pagoda through tasks such as helping maintain its grounds, assisting in supplies preparation, and interacting with monks. This has developed a greater sense of cultural appreciation among participants, as well as providing an opportunity to give back to communities around them.

### Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) Vietnam Corporate Programme

On 10 June 2023, we welcomed staff from RMIT Finance Department back to participate in our programme, which was designed to help participants develop effective communication as well as problem-solving skills. It focused on developing individuals' understanding of their own leadership styles while emphasising the core competencies of effective leaders. Such competencies included the ability to communicate, problem-solving, and active listening among others.

## Course Summary

Outward Bound facilitators guided participants through personal and group reflection and feedback to help them better understand themselves, their roles within the team, and how this learning can be applied to their work environment.



*Team initiatives are excellent exercises to boost team trust and spirits*

### Hikvision Corporate Programme

From 23 - 25 June 2023, Outward Bound Vietnam successfully held a leadership building course for staff at managerial levels and young leaders from Hikvision. This tailored corporate course focuses on developing individuals' understanding of their ability to work with others, in problem-solving and decision-making, and teamwork & ability to collaborate, using our unique educational method – “learning and experiencing” following the Experiential Learning Cycle model.



*Participants at a morning yoga session with Outward Bound Vietnam*



*Hikvision staff participating in Indoor Rock Climbing activity*

### British International School Ho Chi Minh City (BIS)

From May 2023 to June 2023, students in grade 9 from British International School participated in a five-day exploratory experience. Activities such as raft building, sea rafting, sea kayaking, environmental learning as well as service learning not only provided students with multiple chances for social interaction and communication skills development, but also helped students discover more about themselves, others, and the world around them. Participating in these activities, students were also challenged on a personal level whereby those challenging experiences helped them identify their strengths, and weaknesses and recognise their positive behaviours.

# Course Summary

## Wellspring Bilingual School

From 24 - 27 July 2023, Outward Bound Vietnam provided experiential courses for students from grade 6 to grade 9 from Wellspring Bilingual School with 5 days of journey-style and centre-based experience in Binh Dinh. Through a variety of team initiatives, indoor rock climbing, hiking, and raft building, the dynamics of the group and their ability to communicate with one another helped students build empathy and understanding of others' needs. This developed a greater sense of appreciation among students, as well as providing an opportunity to give back to communities around them.



*Students cooperating during the raft building challenge*



*Wellspring Bilingual Students during hiking activity*



*An organisation registered as a life-skills provider  
with the Vietnamese Department of Education & Training (DOET)*

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