



OUTWARD BOUND
VIETNAM

NEWSLETTER

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

It has been a busy year for all of us at Outward Bound Vietnam (OBV), and I am pleased that our programmes were back on track for growth this year. As 2023 draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to share some key updates for the year, particularly on our programmes and engagements in the last quarter of the year.

OBV has served around 2,330 participants from 23 schools and other institutions in 2023. In the last quarter of the year, OBV conducted outdoor adventure education programmes for our overseas partners from educational institutions – namely from Republic Polytechnic Singapore and Singapore University of Social Sciences. Overall, we received very positive feedback from all our course participants throughout the year. On average, 85% of our participants learned how to be more compassionate and of service to others; 88% became more environmentally conscious after an OBV programme; 85% said they became more resilient in the face of adversity; 81% realized they became more self-confident; and 80% said they better appreciated the value of working as a team and less fearful of speaking up in a group setting. Additionally, our programme partners and school leaders have also given us positive feedback on the impact of our programmes on their students/children/youth. I am heartened by the very positive feedback we have received, and we will continue to improve our delivery of outdoor education programmes to all our partners. You can read more about some of our client endorsements in this edition of our newsletter.

OBV is still a relatively new school, getting its full license from Outward Bound International (OBI) in 2019. As part of a biennial requirement, OBI conducted a Risk Management Review at OBV in August and provided an endorsement of our programmes and safety management systems. The review enabled the sharing of strategic insights on strengthening our programmes and governance systems. I am pleased to share an extract from the review report as follows: “Outward Bound Vietnam has made good progress to date, for which many individuals should take credit. Significant potential for growth exists but OBV is at a critical point in its evolution and challenges need to be navigated in the next two years to enable the organization to continue to grow successfully.” – Mark Evans, OBI Lead Reviewer.

I was privileged to lead an OBV delegation to the OBI World Conference in Brazil in October, accompanied by our Patron – Mr. Stefan Tan. This was an excellent opportunity to network with Board Members, fellow Executive Directors, and staff from the Outward Bound (OB) international community to share best practices and knowledge of pertinent issues and challenges faced by OB Schools. Read more about the OBI World Conference in this edition of our newsletter!

As we look to the future, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. OBV will partake in OBI’s Templeton Foundation Global Research Project next year. A fundamental aim of this research is to examine how the Outward Bound model has been adapted across cultural contexts, and we are excited to be part of this study. Locally, our new batch of trainee instructors who just joined us in November have started their journey to become qualified instructors by March next year! We hope to hire more staff in 2024 to fuel our sustainable growth plans. There is much work to be done ahead, but I am confident that with our strong foundation and your unwavering commitment, OBV will continue to achieve great things.



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I would like to thank our Patron, Governance Council, Risk Management Committee, Staff, School Leaders, and all our Clients and Partners for continuing to believe in the mission of OBV – which is to help people recognize their true potential through adventure, challenge, service, and self-discovery.

Here's to a future that's as bright and promising as the team that powers it! I look forward to your continued support in 2024. Wishing you a joyous festive season and a Happy New Year with your loved ones!

Elamaaran Balakrishnan
Executive Director



Engagement

Outward Bound International (OBI) Review

As part of Outward Bound International (OBI)'s biennial Risk Management Review (RMR), Outward Bound Vietnam (OBV) welcomed Mr. Mark Evans as the OBI lead reviewer to our campuses in Ha Long, Binh Dinh, and our headquarters in Hanoi from 14 to 17 August this year. Mr. Mark Evans is the outgoing Executive Director from Outward Bound Oman. The aim of the RMR is to ensure that Outward Bound (OB) schools have appropriate governance systems in place and validated programmes as well as operation management systems that are aligned to OBI's best practices. Furthermore, the RMR endorses if OBV programmes are conducted in a safe manner that elicit positive youth/people development outcomes, contextualized to Vietnam. Thus, the RMR was a great opportunity for OBV to showcase our commitment to safety-management, excellence in outdoor education and the continuous improvement to our governance model to be viewed as a professionally managed outdoor education institution. Mr. Mark Evans also took time to interview Professor John Rickard, Chairman of OBV's Governing Council, and Ms. Deborah Howarth, Chairperson of OBV's Risk Management Committee. Mr. Stefan Tan - Patron of OBV, also visited Hanoi during the RMR to articulate his vision for OBV's growth in Vietnam. OBV Executive Director, Mr. B. Elamaaran took the opportunity to articulate OBV's mission and expansion plans with local authorities/senior officials during the OBI RMR, to get their continued support for our programmes in Vietnam. Following the RMR, OBI issued a Certificate of Endorsement – which enables OBV to continue its operations as a fully licensed Outward Bound School until 31 December 2025, before the next RMR is due.



Mr. Mark Evans (right) during his visit to OBV



Mr. Mark Evans & OBV team (Mr. B. Elamaaran – Executive Director and Mr. Nguyen Tung Linh – Deputy Director) networked with Binh Dinh Province Senior Officials

Outward Bound International (OBI) World Conference 2023 in Brazil

OBV attended the OBI Pre-conference Expedition and World Conference 2023 in Brazil from 21-25 October. The delegation was led by our Executive Director – Mr. B. Elamaaran and comprised our Patron – Mr. Stefan Tan, OBV (SG) Director – Mr. Benaiah Wee, and OBV Deputy Director – Mr. Nguyen Tung Linh. About 100 delegates (Guest Speakers, Staff and Board members) from the extensive network of Outward Bound schools across 34 countries attended the Conference. The main objectives of the Conference were to share best practices across a range of themes relevant to the Outward Bound community, gain knowledge of new OBI initiatives as well as insights into other Outward Bound schools' programmes and expertise through in-person networking. OBV also took the opportunity to discuss possibilities for more regional collaborations, particularly among regional OB schools in Asia through bilateral meetings. In addition, the OBV delegation actively participated in various workshops on topics pertaining to strategic risk management, governance models, creative marketing strategies, new research areas in Outdoor Education, fundraising initiatives and how OB schools can help mitigate the effects of climate change through nature-bound initiatives.

Engagement



OBV delegation near the summit of Pedra do Pauzinho, Brazil as part of the Pre-conference activity



Dr. Clare Dallat – OBV Risk Management Committee member, Mr. Stefan Tan – OBV Patron and Mr. B. Elamaaran – OBV Executive Director at the Conference

OBV also shared insights about our programmes and collaboration opportunities through a poster presentation at the Conference. Finally, OBV voted at the OBI annual general meeting, which saw a leadership transition with the appointment of a new chairperson of the OBI Board and a new Board. In summary, the OBI Conference provided us with valuable insights on outdoor adventure education, created a platform for fostering professional connections, and provided inspiration to further enhance our programmes, safety management systems and initiatives that can be implemented back in Vietnam.



Mr. Nguyen Tung Linh – OBV Deputy Director attended the Risk Management Review Workshop



OBV Poster Presentation Session

Engagement



About 100 international delegates from OB schools around the world attended the Conference

OBV Donates to Outward Bound Brazil



On behalf of OBV, our Patron Mr. Stefan Tan donated USD 1,500 to Outward Bound Brazil – a non-profit outdoor education school that operates in Campos do Jordão, Brazil. The donation will go towards the building of the new Outward Bound Brazil base, which will enable OB Brazil to offer more programmes and reach more participants. As OBV and Outward Bound Brazil are both part of the Outward Bound network, this donation is not only a sign of our mutual support and appreciation, but also our commitment to the Outward Bound vision of creating a more compassionate and resilient world.

In accepting the donation, Executive Director of Outward Bound Brazil Mr. Andreas G. Martin said: “Outward Bound Vietnam’s support is instrumental in shaping a new chapter in the story of Outward Bound Brazil, and we are truly grateful for your partnership. Thank you for your generosity. We look forward to keeping you updated on the progress of this exciting endeavour.”

Mr. Andreas G. Martin – Outward Bound Brazil’s Executive Director at the OBI World Conference 2023 in Brazil

Engagement

The 5th ASEAN Youth Fellowship (AYF) Programme

Mr. B. Elamaaran – OBV Executive Director, and Ms. Nguyen Huong Lan – OBV Director, joined the 5th ASEAN Youth Fellowship 2023 Programme (AYF) from 02 to 03 November 2023. The AYF is an apex programme for established young leaders from diverse sectors and backgrounds in ASEAN. The programme was organized by the National Youth Council Singapore (NYC) and the Singapore International Foundation (SIF), providing a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration. During one of the networking sessions, we had the opportunity to share more about OBV as a social enterprise with policymakers and young leaders with diverse backgrounds from ASEAN.



In the photo: Mr. David Chua – Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Council (NYC), Mr. B. Elamaaran – OBV Executive Director and the Singapore delegation at the 5th AYF event in Hanoi



Mr. Nguyen Anh Tuan, T-Associate of Vietnam Silicon Valley Foundation, a delegate from Vietnam shared: “Meeting OBV post AYF deepened my understanding about Outward Bound values; I found OBV and me sharing the same interest about outdoor and environmental education. From there, we started to ideate for possibilities for an environmental outdoor education programme for ASEAN youth in the future.”

OBV looks forward to collaborating with like-minded youths like Mr. Nguyen Anh Tuan to develop outdoor environmental programmes in future.

Engagement

Raffles Night Networking in Hanoi: Recap 2023

OBV was proud to participate as an in-kind sponsor at the recent Raffles Night Networking event in Hanoi: Recap 2023 hosted by Singapore Chamber of Commerce Vietnam. We seized this opportunity to introduce our vision, mission, and programmes to all the attendees. The aim was to foster partnership development opportunities with corporations and businesses in Vietnam through our corporate team development programmes.

While the Outward Bound (OB) brand is more established in other countries, we believe that every journey begins with a single step. Every OB school, no matter where, must start and evolve from somewhere. Despite being just 7 years old in Vietnam, OBV has made significant strides in promoting outdoor and team-building programmes. Events like the Raffles Night provide valuable platforms for OBV to showcase the magic of our customized Outward Bound corporate programmes, which aim to build effective teams in the outdoors that may translate into long-term benefits in the workplace.

We are committed to the continuous evolution of OBV. As we continue to grow and establish our presence in Vietnam, we look forward to more opportunities to showcase the transformative power of our corporate development programmes.



OBV team (Mr. B. Elamaaran – OBV Executive Director, Ms. Nguyen Huong Lan – OBV Director, Ms. Ta Thi Thanh Huong – OBV Marketing and Business Development Manager and Ms. Bui Thi Lam Oanh – OBV Marketing and Business Development Executive) had the chance to introduce our mission and programmes to all attendees for partnership development opportunities through our corporate development programmes

Engagement

The Singapore International School (SIS) Ha Long Christmas Fair

OBV Ha Long team had a wonderful time at the Christmas Fair organized by the Singapore International School (SIS) Ha Long during the first week of December. Families of SIS Ha Long students, OBV staff, and the wider community were warmly welcomed by SIS Ha Long to partake in the festivities. The day was filled with laughter, games, and the magic of a Christmas Fair, all in the name of charity. At the OBV booth, we organized some exciting games and initiatives like gutter ball and cup stacking, which later turned into a spontaneous game from the own creativity of the kids. It was heartwarming to see them actively engaged in OBV activities and games at the Fair. This event was more than just a celebration; it was an opportunity to deepen community engagement and exemplify the spirit of giving.

“Thanks to OBV, for rising to the occasion and participating with at the Fair to have a bit of fun with the OBV booth. I appreciate the team’s initiative, the fast response, and the effort to come up with engaging games and activities, and the energy and smiles from your staff; please convey my sincere thanks to your team for your outstanding efforts.” – Mr. Mustafa Bin Fazal – Principal of the Singapore International School (SIS) Ha Long.



Students of SIS Ha Long participating in the games and initiatives organized by OBV Ha Long at the Christmas Fair

Nguyen Nga Center for Young People with Disabilities

Mr. B. Elamaaran – OBV Executive Director, dedicated some of his time to support a charity event organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The event focused on improving social care and assistance services for individuals with severe disabilities. The event was also attended by the Nguyen Nga Center for young people with disabilities, a partner that OBV collaborates with to support individuals with disabilities.



Mr. B. Elamaaran – OBV Executive Director & Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Nga – Founder of Nguyen Nga Center for young people with disabilities at the event

Engagement

OBV Recce to Hai Ha District, Quang Ninh

In October, as part of our efforts to find new training areas for our programmes, OBV met with Hai Ha District Senior Officials and explored the possibility of expanding our horizons to the region. With the consent of Hai Ha District local authorities, OBV sent a reconnaissance team to Hai Ha province to explore new coastal areas and land terrain for expeditions. During the recce, we assessed the feasibility of conducting water-based expeditions (e.g., kayaking/rafting) as well as land-based expeditions (e.g. hiking) and combining these with place-based cultural activities (e.g. understanding ethnic minorities communities & tea culture), through a multi-day programme design. Hai Ha has stunning locations and offers many possibilities for outdoor education programmes. OBV aims to pilot a programme here in 2024.



OBV team met with Hai Ha District Senior Officials in October



OBV recce team exploring the Duc Mountain terrain



The Cai Chien Island area

Staffing and Training

New staff

In July, OBV welcomed two new staff from overseas – Mr. Bharat Yadav (Senior Instructor) and Ms. Kamna Mishra (Lead Instructor), as the newest members of our Ha Long Basecamp team. Both have an impressive background as outdoor instructors in India and the UAE. Between them, they have extensive experience at Outward Bound Bharat, Nature Bound Sahayadri and National Adventure Foundation in India where they led a wide range of activities such as rock climbing, abseiling, high rope, low rope, orientation, hiking, and zip lining.

With their passion and extensive training expertise, Bharat and Kamna bring a burst of energy and enthusiasm to OBV's mission of inspiring participants to unlock their full potential through experiential education while at the same time increasing the quality of our local staff.



Mr. Bharat Yadav – Senior Instructor @ OBV Ha Long



Ms. Kamna Mishra – Lead Instructor @ OBV Ha Long

The new intake of trainees for the Outdoor Instructor Training Programme (OITP), Indigo Training School, consisting of 5 new trainees commenced training on 1 November. Our trainee instructors will be trained on outdoor technical competencies, soft-skills, and risk-management systems before being assigned to observe and learn from their more experienced peers in the field. They will conclude their intensive training period by March 2024, ready to be deployed in the field. We wish our trainees all best as they set out on their rigorous journey to become qualified OBV Instructors!



Indigo Trainees (left to right): Chau Minh Trung, Tran Thi My Nhung, Dinh Thi Kieu Oanh, Nguyen Thi Sam, Duong Phuong Mai

Staffing and Training

Staff Training

Between the months of August and December, Instructional staff at OBV Binh Dinh underwent continuous technical trainings to remain current in their hard-skills. Staff built their competency in Outdoor Abseiling refreshers and Improvised rafting activities delivered by our more experienced Lead Instructors. Additionally, our annual Staff Expedition in Binh Dinh offered a unique opportunity for us to explore and develop new hiking routes, practice emergency response protocols, and enhance instructors closed-terrain advanced navigation skills. Staff also engaged in their annual medical refreshers such as Wilderness Advanced First Aid (WAFA) Training, which keeps all our staff abreast of any new medical practices in the field.



Abseil Rescue Training



Staff Expedition in Binh Dinh



Wilderness Advanced First Aid (WAFA) Training conducted in OBV Binh Dinh by Viristar

Staffing and Training

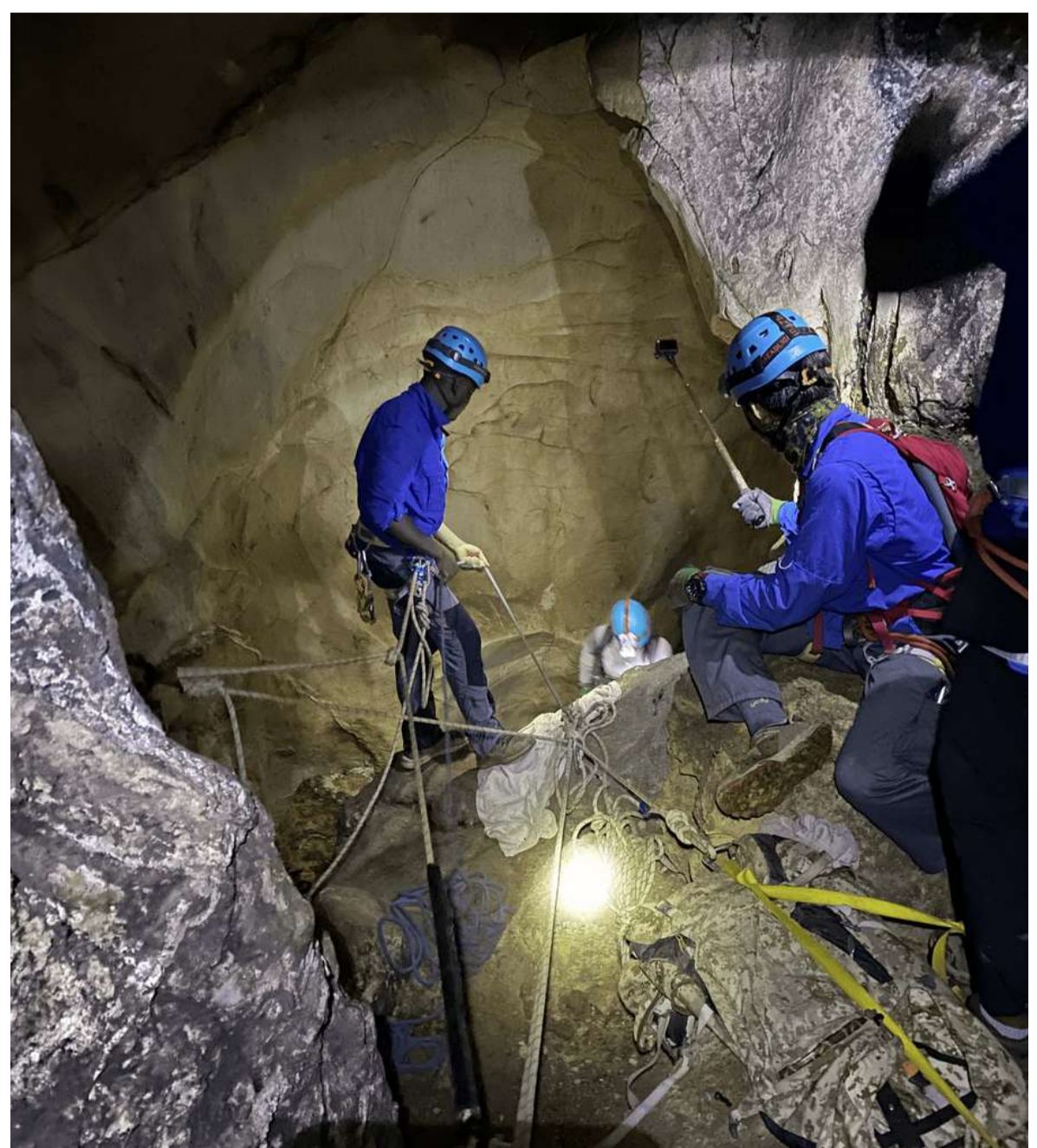
While site recce and developing new hiking trails were the focus for the quarter, staff in Ha Long Base still found time to refresh on their Facilitation skills, including understanding Outdoor Education Learning Models and structuring learning experiences. There were also more resources and activities developed for programme planning. More advanced caving lessons incorporating ecological literacy and advanced abseil rescue techniques were also conducted, though updated lesson plans and curriculum.



Recce & Advanced Navigation Training



Nature Bound Games and Initiatives Training



Cave Abseiling Training

Course Summary

In these recent months, OBV welcomed many clients from KinderWorld International Group (KIG), local and international schools as well as corporate sector to our Basecamps in Binh Dinh and Ha Long.

MiTek Vietnam

From 10 to 13 October and 17 to 20 October, OBV conducted 4-day tailored corporate courses for staff from MiTek Vietnam in Ha Long. These corporate training courses were specially designed and well-conducted with an aim to meet MiTek's requirements for their staff to develop better communication skills, foster teamwork and build self-confidence. This is the second time OBV has been entrusted by MiTek to experience our exciting and impactful programmes, bringing the total number of corporate participants to OBV to just over 200 participants in over 2 years.

Mr. Trent David Smith – Vice President Operations (COO) of MiTek Vietnam shared with us: "Participating in Outward Bound Vietnam was a transformative experience for our team. It fostered a sense of teamwork and allowed us to face real challenges together. We learned to listen, reflect, and approach problems with creativity. Outward Bound Vietnam created an environment where we could truly flourish, and we are forever grateful for the lessons we learned."



MiTek Vietnam staff hiking and cave exploration activities @ OBV Ha Long

Republic Polytechnic Singapore (RP)

OBV welcomed the students from Republic Polytechnic Singapore to join our course in the stunning Ha Long area. Over the span of 7 enriching days - from 11 to 17 September; participants immersed themselves in thrilling activities like hiking through scenic trails, conquering outdoor abseiling, mastering camp craft, embarking on rock hiking, navigating the tranquil waters through kayaking, exploring caves, setting up camp, engaging in night reviews and reflection. The tailored programme was a holistic experience that left students with a deeper understanding of leadership, an enhanced capacity for planning and organizing, better teamwork, and a commitment to community development and environment sustainability.



RP students attempting Team Initiatives @ OBV Ha Long



RP students exploring caves @ OBV Ha Long

Course Summary

Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)

From 30 November to 7 December, OBV hosted SUSS students aged between 22 – 42 for a 7-day programme at our Basecamps in Binh Dinh and Ha Long. The programmes were specially designed to give participants an impactful expedition-based outdoor adventure education programme as well as raise awareness of Vietnamese craftsmanship & culture. In addition to taking on challenges like abseiling, rock-climbing, kayaking, jungle navigation etc., the participants also undertook ecological and community service engagements. Cumulatively, the combination of outdoor education pedagogy and cultural immersion engagements for the participants helped promote youth networking to understand the similarities and differences between Vietnam and Singapore.



SUSS students in the community service engagement organized by OBV Binh Dinh & Nguyen Nga Center for young people with disabilities



SUSS students commencing on their Kayaking expedition @ OBV Ha Long



SUSS students group photo with OBV Executive Director and Instructors at the official programme opening

Course Summary

Concordia International School Hanoi

The Concordia student development programme, held from 25 to 29 September, offered a developmental experience to 43 enthusiastic participants in Grade 8 at Concordia International School, Hanoi. Over the course of 5 adventure-packed days at the serene Binh Dinh Base, students engaged in many exciting activities, including indoor wall climbing, outdoor abseiling, raft building, rafting, and low-ropes challenges. The activities pushed participants both personally as well as a team, allowing them to identify their strengths to overcome physical and mental challenges. The course enabled the holistic development of the students by fostering bonds, raising socio-emotional awareness, motivation to excel, and becoming confident in public speaking.



Concordia International School Hanoi students @ OBV Binh Dinh



Mr. B. Elamaaran (OBV Executive Director) welcoming Mr. Stephen Ly (Principal, Concordia International school) at Phu Cat domestic Airport in Quy Nhon

Principal of Concordia International School, Hanoi – Mr Stephen Ly said:

“I have been an international school principal for almost a decade and have worked with a range of high-quality experiential learning organizations like Outward Bound Vietnam. There are three main reasons why I choose to trust OBV with my students’ learning: (1) Safety, (2) Passion and (3) Commitment to improvement. My top priority is and will always be student safety and I am convinced that safety is OBV’s top priority as well. Whether they are preparing to have students participate in indoor climbing, raft construction, backpacking, or abseiling, OBV’s team is thorough, self-aware, and experienced. Their instructors consistently bring energy and genuine enthusiasm for working with adolescents to our programmes. This level of excitement and engagement is consistent and speaks to the intentionality with which OBV trains their staff. OBV has earned my business and my trust, and I look forward to continuing working with them in the future.”

Course Summary

European International School HCMC (EIS)

OBV hosted 86 Year 8 & Year 9 students of European International School HCMC (EIS) from 2 to 6 October for an outdoor adventure at our Basecamp in Binh Dinh. For Year 8, the programme focused on self-reliance, social skills, and service learning, while the Year 9 programme emphasized on developing leadership, resilience, and cultural understanding. Both groups were involved in a range of outdoor activities, from service learning to adventure challenges (e.g. abseiling, kayaking), with an intent to foster personal growth and raise community awareness.



EIS students during Service-Learning activity @ OBV Binh Dinh

QSI International School Hai Phong

High school students from QSI International School Hai Phong joined a 4-day OBV expedition from 9 to 12 October in Ha Long, with the focus on developing self-perseverance in challenging situations and effective communication skills. The course also emphasized social responsibility and taking accountability for one's actions. Throughout this transformative journey, students engaged in diverse activities, including camping at a historic Pagoda, abseiling down a cliff face, hiking, acquiring kayak skills, and working through team challenges. The programme concluded with a final challenge and programme review, allowing students to reflect on their experiences, making this journey an essential step of their personal growth and raising of their social consciousness.



QSI International School Hai Phong students on their kayaking expedition @ OBV Ha Long

Course Summary

International School Ho Chi Minh City American Academy (ISHCMC AA)

From 30 October to 3 November, Year 12 students of International School Ho Chi Minh City American Academy (ISHCMC AA) participated in the OBV programme, which focused on a variety of learning objectives. The programme was tailored to focus on two learning outcomes: develop themselves and relationships with others. Through the specifically designed activities such as personal goals, team values, indoor wall climbing and camp craft, the students were given the opportunity to work towards self-realization, develop important skills and competencies necessary for personal and interpersonal growth such as teamwork, trust building and enhancing relationships with others.

International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

OBV – ISHCMC expedition from 20 to 24 November for 93 Year 10 students from International School of Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) was conducted with a focus on developing key competencies in students. Through activities such as indoor climbing wall and abseiling, environmental learning and camp craft, students not only gained self-confidence and learned to trust their actions but also developed a service-oriented mindset and built strong relationships with others. Additionally, the programme emphasized on making positive social contributions through community engagement and provided a transformative experience for students, equipping them with valuable skills and fostering their personal growth.

KinderWorld International Group (KIG)

OBV proudly serves as a strategic partner with the KinderWorld International Group (KIG), having conducted capacity-building courses for KIG schools and staff since 2017.

From August to December, OBV organized courses for different cohorts of various Singapore International Schools, including Danang, Can Tho, Binh Duong New City, Vung Tau, and Ho Chi Minh City at both of our Basecamps in Binh Dinh and Ha Long. At OBV, we place great emphasis on developing tailor-made courses to ensure the safety of participants and the attainment of optimal learning outcomes. Thus, our programmes were customized to meet the learning needs of each school's desired learning programme objectives through outdoor education.

From 11 to 15 October, OBV was poised to continue our commitment by delivering programmes for diverse KIG staff cohorts spanning various branches and divisions throughout Vietnam. KIG places paramount importance on staff development, recognizing it as the pivotal catalyst for business expansion and enduring corporate progress. Therefore, we meticulously designed the programmes to enhance team effectiveness, communication, and problem-solving skills. Such acquired skill sets has proven to be effective in improving employee performance and promoting excellence at work to create a dynamic and cooperative work environment.



KinderWorld International Group (KIG) staff on their hiking expedition @ OBV Binh Dinh

Contact us for more information!



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