



INSPIRED  
**INDIVIDUALS**



TRANSFORMED  
**COMMUNITIES**



2020 KEY HIGHLIGHTS





## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

“2020 was the year where we accelerated our digitalisation efforts to transform our work processes, which is a significant milestone for a 54 year old training institution.”

**Nicholas Conceicao**  
Executive Director  
Outward Bound Singapore

The year 2020 was a challenging year for Outward Bound Singapore (OBS); indeed, for most of us too! Many of our programmes were suspended during the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertainties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated our efforts to adapt to new realities and embrace new possibilities that we previously never explored.

I'm pleased that many of our staff stepped forward to contribute to the national effort against COVID-19. Our main campus on Pulau Ubin was converted to a Government Quarantine Facility (GQF) within short notice at the onset of the pandemic. Even during the national circuit breaker restrictions, our staff worked closely with our contractors to ensure the GQF operations were not disrupted. During the outbreak of COVID-19 within the migrant worker community, several teams of OBS staff were deployed to manage three temporary dormitories for affected migrant workers. They worked steadily in shifts round the clock for several weeks to care for migrant workers who were housed in the temporary dormitories to control the outbreak of COVID-19. Two of our senior staff were also seconded to the Ministry of Health during the pandemic to support the operations and crisis management teams. Several of our staff also stepped up as Safe Distancing Ambassadors to ensure that people complied with safe distancing measures. As Singapore transited to Phase Three, our staff were able to resume their duties at OBS with valuable lessons learnt. From the feedback received from multiple stakeholders, I'm proud to share that our staff exemplified the OBS values of compassion, service, and professionalism.

I'm heartened to see our staff empowered with their new-found digital skills to develop innovative applications and tools for greater learning impact. Despite disruptions posed by the pandemic, we also upgraded our fleet of sea-crafts with new safety boats and on-boarded a new partner i.e. International SOS Pte Ltd to augment our medical support capabilities. We also launched the seven Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs) outlining our strategic goals towards 2025. Each of the seven SFAs are driven by workgroups led by an appointed SFA Change Champion from our leadership team.

In tandem with the easing of national restrictions, we have been able to resume our programmes in phases with COVID-19 social distancing and Safe Management Measures in place. Since August 2020, we have successfully resumed four programmes, including our leadership development courses for the Singapore Police Force, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Physical Education and Sports Science Programme for developing trainee-teachers specialising in physical education, and a character development programme for the youth of Darul Ihsan Orphanage. In 2021, the MOE-OBS Challenge Programme for Secondary 3 students will resume as a series of non-residential camps in line with prevailing national COVID-19 measures.

Finally, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 restrictions, I'm happy to see many of our Alumni actively engaging online via virtual platforms. Although our annual event, Project IsLand-A-Hand was cancelled, more than 300 youth were engaged in twelve webinars and virtual events throughout the year. One interesting virtual event launched last year was the inaugural OBin Ubin – a simulation-based game of how to sustain a business on Pulau Ubin while ensuring minimal negative impact on the environment. Implemented and hosted by our Leadership & Service Award Alumni, this online event provided participants with new perspectives on how to reduce environmental impact to preserve the rich heritage of Pulau Ubin. Their energy, enthusiasm, and passion to serve illustrate how our youth have the potential and willingness to create social impact beyond our programmes.

I hope that in 2021, we can put some of our disappointments of 2020 behind us and look forward to a fresh start. We will continue working with our valued partners to bring even more Singaporean youth on their unique journey of self-discovery and inner transformation. May the Year of the Ox bring all our partners continued prosperity, success, and good health. True to our motto, may we continue 'To Serve, To Strive and Not to Yield'.


## LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

“There is more in us than we know. If we can be made to see it, perhaps for the rest of our lives, we will be unwilling to settle for less.”

**Kurt Hahn**  
Founder of Outward Bound



**18**   
OBS programmes conducted

**1868**   
Total OBS youth outreach ranging from schooling to working adults

**2053**   
Total number of migrant workers helped

**3**   
Total number of Foreign Workers Temporary Dormitories



# 7 STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS



## 1. PROGRAMME EXCELLENCE



## & INCLUSIVITY



OBS aims to be the national benchmark in programme curation and pedagogy within the field of outdoor and adventure education. Hence, OBS constantly tailors our programmes to our stakeholders' learning and developmental needs. Against all odds in 2020, OBS rose to the challenge posed by the COVID-19 situation to successfully conduct some programmes while adhering to the national safety guidelines.

### Student Learning Survey and Evaluation and Instructor Performance Dashboard

The programmes team embarked on a project to automate the Student Learning Survey and Evaluation and Instructor Performance Dashboard last year. This project utilises robotic process automation to analyse and present evaluation and instructor performance data from our Student Learning Survey onto a dashboard for easier understanding and retrieval of data. Most importantly, this allows staff to generate purposeful and timely data analytics/reports of OBS programmes.

Prior to the launch of the Student Learning Survey and Evaluation and Instructor Performance Dashboard, staff spent an average of 1-2 weeks collating and cleaning the evaluation data. With the successful implementation of the automated Student Learning Survey and Evaluation and Instructor Performance Dashboard, staff will now be able to get timely data and evaluation reports within 24 hours!



### Darul Ihsan Programme

Working together with Darul Ihsan Orphanage, this specially tailored programme exposed the youth to the great outdoors to strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem. COVID-19 had posed many challenges, especially when it came to the preparation and execution of the programme. It was challenging to develop a teambuilding programme as physical proximity and interaction are key factors for team bonding and this had to be minimised.

To better prepare Instructors to understand the youth better, a webinar session was conducted, to provide them with some insights and perspectives on the youth's personalities and behaviours at home. It also gave the Instructors better sensing of how they could better engage these youth to better build rapport.

Additionally, with the participants coming from varied backgrounds, Instructors needed time to understand their culture, slang and language. A face-to-face pre-course briefing session was also conducted to allow both the Instructors and the youth to build rapport with each other before the programme commenced.

Despite challenges, the programme was conducted successfully. The welfare officers attached to the programme commented that the Instructors implemented the Safe Management Measures well throughout the programme. They were particularly impressed by the open and consistent communication that the Instructors maintained with them to ensure that the participants' learning needs were met. This programme was a testament to the team's ability to curate an inclusive programme with the desired learning outcomes despite the COVID-19 pandemic situation.





# 1. PROGRAMME EXCELLENCE & INCLUSIVITY



## & INCLUSIVITY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OBS could only reboot some programmes from August 2020 starting with the Uniformed Groups. New norms were set with stringent Safe Management Measures put in place to keep both our staff and participants safe. In addition, OBS ventured into the digital space with the OBS Alumni leading the march to connect and engage on virtual platforms.



### 19-day Singapore Police Force (SPF) Leadership Development Programme

The 19-day programme is part of the SPF Officer Cadet Trainee (OCT) Leadership Programme, where the OCTs undergo an intensive and challenging experiential training in OBS, Pulau Ubin. It was especially challenging to plan and execute this programme due to the added stress of being the first OBS programme to be conducted with the incorporation of Safe Management Measures (SMMs). This required lots of detailed planning on the part of the programmes team and dealing with dynamic situations on the part of the Instructors conducting the programme, where safety management and social distancing were the main priority, without compromising on the course quality.

The readiness of the Instructor to adapt to the changing needs on the ground enabled the whole experience to be fruitful and rewarding for all involved. Despite heavy logistical support needed to provide all participants with individual equipment as much as possible, both Instructors and the SPF Mentors worked together to ensure minimal disruptions to the programme. As a testimony to the success of the 19-day programme, SPF expressed their appreciation for how OBS incorporated the SMMs seamlessly into the programme, and yet was able to successfully deliver the programme outcomes.



### 9-day Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) Leadership Development Programme

The SCDF 9-day Leadership Challenge programme was specially designed to enable the Section Commanders in training to build and hone their leadership knowledge through the outdoors. The customised programme ensured they would be able to be better prepared for their future deployment through a series of customised challenges in the outdoors. As part of the programme, various leadership theories and models were introduced to these Section Commanders in training so that they could enhance their leadership styles to lead teams in dynamic situations. The key outcome from this programme is for the Section Commanders in training to draw positive experiences during the OBS course and inspire them to lead effectively in the field.

With the COVID-19 restrictions, many dynamic factors of the programme had to be considered. This was to ensure that the Safe Management Measures (SMMs) were implemented seamlessly and that the programme could be conducted smoothly. Some of the challenges included the limited number of campsites available to accommodate safe distancing measures, while activities such as communal meals and meetings also had to be rethought and modified to be in line with the SMMs. However, Instructors rose to the challenge and conducted the programme innovatively and professionally to deliver an impactful programme for the Section Commanders in training.

One of the key highlights of this programme was the SCDF Head Frontline Operations Training Centre LTC Ow Yong Tuck Wah's first visit to OBS, where he had the opportunity to see the Section Commanders in training in action whilst out on both land and sea expeditions. The interaction with their Senior Commander was indeed a morale booster to all the trainees!



#### OBin Ubin

Created by the Leadership & Service Award Alumni and organised in collaboration with the Partnership Engagement Unit, 17 participants attended the second run of OBin Ubin – a virtual simulation game to learn about Pulau Ubin business owners' challenges. In the process, participants also gained a better awareness of what they could do to help minimise the environmental impact on Pulau Ubin.



#### OBS Oh Snap! Basic Phone Photography Webinar

The first webinar for Alumni was conducted by Faizola Nordin, a former OBS staff. 14 Alumni learnt useful techniques for smartphone photo taking and increased their confidence to take better photos with their handphones.



#### Appreciation Language Webinar

24 Alumni were engaged in a series of interactive activities to better appreciate each other by using the appropriate 'appreciation language'. All participants walked away with a greater awareness of the five appreciation languages and how they could use this to create more meaningful relationships.



#### Basic Leadership Skills Webinar

The webinar equipped 23 Alumni with knowledge on the 3 phases of leadership (Self-leadership, team leadership, organisational leadership), but with an emphasis on self-leadership. The webinar zoomed in on self-leadership and its tools which were useful for the Alumni to use.



#### Basic Facilitation Webinar

Conducted and facilitated by a Leadership & Service Award Alumni, this webinar provided 18 Alumni with basic facilitation theories and techniques. Our Alumni also had the opportunity to apply what they learnt by conducting debrief sessions, which provided opportunities for their self-confidence to be boosted through hands-on experiences.



#### Alumni Webinars



#### Introduction to Basic Project Management Webinar

The webinar equipped 23 Alumni with a Basic Project Management framework, that they could use as a project management guide. The Alumni were also exposed to tools, processes and methods of idea generation through brainstorming and managing responsibilities within a team.



#### The Coffee Journey: From Seed to Cup webinar

17 Alumni came together for a Coffee Journey sharing session, where they learnt about the history of coffee and gained a greater appreciation for the beverage. The Alumni also gained insights into the art of coffee roasting and how it affected the quality of the drink being served.

### Adventure Heritage Trail Webinar



OBS has been situated on the western side of Pulau Ubin since 1967 to conduct its outdoor programmes. This webinar organised last year enabled the public to have a peek and enjoy nature, as well as learn about the unique heritage found along trails here that are usually inaccessible to them. The purpose of this virtual Adventure Heritage Trail was to raise awareness, develop a sense of curiosity and appreciate Pulau Ubin's heritage. This project was the result of a collaboration between OBS and the National Heritage Board, to showcase the unique heritage found in western Pulau Ubin.

Despite limited opportunities for physical interactions and gatherings during COVID-19, OBS quickly adapted and moved the Adventure Heritage Trail to a virtual platform. The aim was for OBS to continue to instil a sense of curiosity and pride for Pulau Ubin heritage and the importance of preserving this for others.

The key highlight was being able to re-create the experience of walking on the actual heritage trail through videos and photos. With the help of the popular mapping app "Relive", the public who attended the first-ever Adventure Heritage Trail Webinar learnt much about Pulau Ubin's heritage. This was evident with all the correct answers that were given for the pop quizzes. The public enthusiastically participated in the pop quizzes, where they received OBS souvenirs for giving the correct answers.



## 2. CUSTOMER & STAKEHOLDER EXCELLENCE

### Serving the Ubin Community

Ubin villagers who share Pulau Ubin with OBS are among our valued and respected stakeholders. As they age, physical mobility becomes increasingly an issue that affects their quality of life. Nine Leadership & Service Award (LSA) Alumni responded to NParks' call for volunteers to render assistance to an elderly Ubin villager. The Ubin resident – Mr Lan had his right leg amputated recently and needed assistance to attend his medical appointments on the mainland. Our LSA Alumni assisted to lay out two different ramps to ensure that Mr Lan's wheelchair could move safely from point to point. This was no easy feat as Mr Lan's house was on a slope and the only way to make the arduous journey from Ubin Village Jetty to the bumboat, and from the bumboat to Changi Point Ferry Terminal was via stairs.

Some of our LSA Alumni have also stepped forth to lead and brief other volunteers. They have also earned appreciation from both NParks and Accessible Ubin, a ground-up initiative to improve transportation to and within Ubin. OBS is proud to have our LSA Alumni serving the Ubin community and exemplify the Alumni tagline of 'Serve-Grow-Inspire'. They are truly an inspiration in serving others with a cheerful heart, without expecting anything in return, and truly embody the OBS motto of 'To Serve, To Strive And Not to Yield!'

### Premature Exit Experience



Unforeseen circumstances will sometimes call for a participant's premature exit from an OBS programme. To create a better service experience for such participants, OBS delved deeper into how to build relationships at all existing touchpoints so that the process becomes more relational. With the implementation of these new processes, OBS aims to create a more holistic and empathetic approach in the way programme exits are managed, in order to create more opportunities for better engagement and feedback.

### Progressive Web Application



To improve our students' pre and post-course experience for the MOE-OBS Challenge (MOC) Programme, the Progressive Web Application (PWA) was a project that was inspired by one of the current problem statements created from the design thinking workshop. The PWA prototype would be ready in mid-2021, whereby youth enrolled in the 2021 MOC programme may be directly engaged through digital platforms through a journey-like gamification concept.

To utilise technology to better engage students, OBS strives to keep up with current digital trends to stay updated and relevant to reach out to our youth audience. Hence, the hope is for the PWA to motivate and excite the students through digital engagement before they come for their OBS programme.

### Design Thinking and Service Experience Workshop

This 4-day workshop saw staff gather over a span of 1-month at Nanyang Polytechnic to explore the application of the design thinking framework and concepts, to enhance existing work processes. Staff were broken up into smaller groups to create current problem statements and identify pain points and challenges faced at work, before applying the concepts taught to improve an existing problem or challenge. The workshop aimed to empower staff to address existing work issues by adopting a more humanistic design approach to create a more compelling positive experience for both internal and external stakeholders.

OBS reaped the rewards of investing time and money in sending 25 staff from nine different departments for this workshop as a total of four projects were identified to be implemented to improve the service experience for both internal and external stakeholders. These projects have either been rolled out successfully or due to be completed in 2021.



### Complaint Management Process



Often seen as an internal process, complaint management has the potential to make or break the service experience for both clients and stakeholders. Ensuring greater control over the quality of information shared in a timely manner with clients, and better stakeholder management were two main areas targeted for improvement after the workshop. This will help in direct feedback gathering from our clients and stakeholders to improve our service standards and customer management experience with them.

### NEW Co-Instruct Training Programme



It was ascertained during the workshop that ensuring Trainee Instructors who were well supported by their coaches and seniors, was an important part of OBS's effort towards building a positive learner-centric culture. Hence, a formalised co-instruct training programme was created to standardise training protocols for both Instructors and Trainee Instructors. This is so that both parties have better clarity of their respective roles and responsibilities when the trainees are mentored.

OBS aims to utilise the formalised co-instruct training programme to better prepare our coaches in coaching the Trainee Instructors.

## 3. OBS CULTURE & EMPLOYER OF CHOICE



OBS values a cohesive work culture with a clear sense of purpose and strives to be an employer of choice. In 2020, strong and positive work ethics were shown on the ground, as OBS was deployed to manage three Foreign Workers Temporary Dormitories during the COVID-19 outbreak in the migrant worker dormitories.



Nuffazli Bin Abu Bakar  
Dormitory Manager

### East Coast Primary School

When I found out the location of the Foreign Workers Temporary Dormitory that I was deployed to, I had mixed emotions as the designated facility was my former primary school! However, reminiscing the good old days had to wait as we were given about a month to convert an unused school premise into a hospitable dormitory. What this entailed was everything from basic needs to electrical, plumbing and security. In addition, managing surrounding residents' expectations and traffic matters were just some of the additional considerations that had to be factored in before we could receive the first batch of migrant workers.

Once dormitory operations commenced, I was assigned the role of the Dormitory Manager and had to oversee security issues and resolve gaps that may surface. My Deputy Dormitory Managers, Daryl, Dylan, Jacky, Li Ying and Melvin, were tasked with the running of daily operations and proved themselves more than equal to the job. It was this collective effort that enabled us to overcome the many challenges we encountered, having faced numerous delays and glitches.

Besides ensuring that the basic lodging needs of the migrant workers were met, I also had to attend to their emotional concerns. I once had to play the role of a peacemaker between an employer and his workers. As the employer could only fork out a limited amount of money to pay his workers each month, this led to unhappiness amongst the workers affected. Witnessing the impasse, I helped to mediate by getting the employer to speak personally to the workers to assure them that they would be paid. I encouraged him to seek his workers' understanding regarding this situation and explained that the money they were being paid, was coming from his pocket as there were just no projects, hence no money.

East Coast Primary School had a tagline. "A dorm becomes a home, when people smile instead of groan." It was heart-warming to see happy workers and staff in a place where many would not want to set foot in. Through this entire experience, I had a better appreciation of the kind of person I was, the values I had and what I stood for. As part of my self-reflection, I extended this appreciation inwardly where my perspective as an Instructor has changed. In the past I used to believe that learning was not just in the four walls of the classroom, it was in the outdoors. Now, learning to me is not a matter of indoors or outdoors, but it is within your headspace.





# 3. OBS CULTURE



## & EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

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**Thiagu Thevar**  
Deputy Dormitory Manager

### Bedok North Secondary School

Having worked from home since the early part of the Circuit Breaker, the opportunity to be out in the field to set up of a temporary dormitory was a welcome relief. Of course, I also felt honoured to play a part in the fight against COVID-19.

Besides working to get the facility ready for the resident migrant workers, I was in-charge of overseeing manpower, scheduling, staff training, and creating standard operating procedures and work processes during the preparation phase. Once the facility was operational, I was assigned the role of the Deputy Dormitory Manager and had to ensure the smooth running of daily activities and oversee the well-being of the migrant workers.

Initially, it was challenging to build rapport with the migrant workers, who were finding the quarantine a difficult experience. In fact, the residents were wary of us at first as they did not believe that we were here to help them. However, I found time and again that the ingenuity of the actual act of offering help allowed bonds to be forged despite language barriers. This approach paid off as the residents started showing appreciation for our efforts and engaged in personal conversations with us.

Another challenge was managing external stakeholders when they saw and interpreted the ground situation in a different manner, and hence proposed processes and solutions that may not be the most practical or relevant for Bedok North Secondary School Dormitory. Although the intent was good, it required additional time and effort on my part to review and counter-propose solutions and processes that would meet the needs of the ground situation. Nonetheless, this challenge taught me to improve on my communication skills such that our messages can be conveyed clearly yet tactfully.

This entire experience was somewhat like a rollercoaster ride where I sometimes felt unhappy or angry because the environment around me did not operate at its best – I felt like a small piece and my actions were worth nothing in doing or contributing to the environment. However, I learnt to be genuine in thoughts and actions and to have the courage to make small changes within my means, such that it was enough for those around me to benefit from.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world” – Mahatma Gandhi



**Bedok North  
Secondary School**



**Greenview  
Secondary School**



**Terence Koek**  
Deputy Dormitory Manager

### Greenview Secondary School

When I was assigned to assist in the dormitory operations, I was a little nervous as I did not know if I had the right expertise for the task at hand since it was something beyond my job scope. Despite the short timeframe for preparation, the customised processes were drawn up for each location, to cater for the differences in layout and facilities. Seeing migrant workers settle in smoothly into the premises made it all worthwhile.

As one of the three Deputy Dormitory Managers, I was tasked with ensuring the smooth running of operations on-site by scheduling manpower and managing the operational standard operating procedures. A typical shift of a Deputy Dormitory Manager included the following:

- Takeover of information from the previous shift
- Coordinated migrant workers' movements
- Monitored the migrant workers' health status
- Routine patrols to check in on the migrant workers

One of the challenges faced was having to manage many unhappy migrant workers who felt trapped in the entire situation. Hence, my team took the brunt of the unhappiness and bridged the communication gaps that existed across agencies and employers as best as possible. While there were differing opinions amongst my team, reaching a common understanding always rallied the team to get the job done. This deployment had been a trial by fire, and I am grateful to discover strengths and qualities I did not know I had.





### 3. OBS CULTURE



## & EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

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**Samuel Tham**  
Assistant Dormitory Manager

#### Greenview Secondary School

I was excited to be part of the team, tasked to set up a dormitory for the migrant workers during the Circuit Breaker period. The fact that it presented a unique challenge and the knowledge that I would be contributing to the national effort was something I relished. I was fortunate to be a part of a strong team that had a robust support system that enabled us to confidently tackle the challenges that arose.

Once the dormitory was in operation, I was assigned the role of the Assistant Dormitory Manager where my primary role was crafting up flow charts for various processes to ensure that we were well prepared for any scenarios. As that was mostly done during the preparation phase, I only had to amend the standard operating processes where needed. My secondary role was to ensure the safety and well-being of the migrant workers, which included us patrolling the rooms and attending to their needs.

One of the greatest challenges was dealing with the migrant workers themselves. Being confined to the compound, the migrant workers had their own fair share of worries that often surfaced in the interactions with ground staff. I personally saw first-hand how the stress of being in the dormitory took its toll on the migrant workers – there was an attempted suicide and general unhappiness from migrant workers, who vented their frustrations on my team with raised voices. However, I also witnessed the camaraderie formed between different races and cultures amongst the migrant workers. Despite the language barriers, there was much care and concern for one another, and I saw friendships forged through adversity.

At the end of the day, I walked away from this experience with a better understanding of the migrant workers among us. Listening to their stories and their struggles with homesickness had shaped my thinking as an Instructor profoundly. While one can never fully comprehend another person's complexity—everyone has something to contribute, and the only way to fully understand this is by practicing empathy.



### 4. STAFF EXCELLENCE & EXPERTISE



OBS staff are strongly encouraged to be passionate learners and adapt to timely changes to be more effective in their roles. In 2020, ground-up initiatives that tapped on individuals' strengths and talents were carried out successfully.



#### OBSpedia

OBSpedia is a platform where Instructors share useful information for the conduct of programmes. It was founded by a team of Instructors, with the initial intention of sharing

notes for just one programme, to facilitate their learnings from the mainland expedition routes. It has since evolved to an Instructor-led online platform, which allows for collaboration across different departments and enables the easier sharing and better accessibility of programme knowledge while on the move.

Instructors have since uploaded plenty of information about Pulau Ubin's flora, fauna and places of interest, and curated information for specific locations on the mainland expedition routes onto OBSpedia. Besides being a repository of valuable data, OBSpedia hosts additional content in the form of stories, quotes, readings and soft skills tips, which Instructors can easily access to boost their knowledge.

OBSpedia is a testament to staff's passion and willingness to share knowledge. While it started off as a small project, it has grown bigger and is now set to benefit all Instructors programme knowledge. This will also go a long way towards enhancing the learning experiences of OBS participants.

#### Dare to Do Award

OBS was awarded the Dare to Do award at the Public Service Transformation Awards last year for the Inclusive Sailing Programme conducted in 2019. This was in recognition of the Dare-to-do spirit that was demonstrated in a sailing programme design that put both mainstream and special education (SPED) students in an OBS sailboat, to embark on a sailing expedition.

This award was a pleasant surprise as well as a positive affirmation to recognise the efforts of OBS and the Ministry of Education Special Education Branch to promote inclusiveness in society through outdoor education. This award is also a testament of staff pushing boundaries and excelling in it, in our efforts to be more inclusive in outdoor education.



Photos were taken in 2019.







## 4. STAFF EXCELLENCE & EXPERTISE



Staff did OBS proud by stepping out of their comfort zones during the Singapore Circuit Breaker period, to contribute to national efforts in the fight against COVID-19.

### Secondment at the Ministry of Health (MOH), Emergency Operation Centre

Being in the heart of things may sound exciting but that comes about with its own set of challenges. In the Emergency Operation Centre, I was tasked to manage various queries from public agencies as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. Due to the urgency

of the operations, I was expected to jump right into the tasks at hand with very short notice. A typical day would see me alternating between collating relevant reports for submission to political holders in the Prime Minister Office and MOH task force, as well as coordinating with different public agencies to better manage people on Stay Home Notice.

I was grateful for the opportunity to work with fellow civil servants from different public agencies. Our teamwork was visible in terms of how we all came together to achieve a common goal to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, I realised that a secondment opportunity offers the best platform for ideas and skillsets to be shared between agencies, whereby we had opportunities to learn and grow as one public service.

### Secondment at the Ministry of Health (MOH), Emergency Preparedness and Response Division

A typical day in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Division consisted of a 12 to 17-hour work shift on either a weekday or weekend, in a challenging and stressful environment. I was fortunate to serve in the Quarantine Operations Cell, Dormitories Operations Cell, and Swab Isolation Facilities (SIF) cell respectively. My duties involved managing COVID-19 related matters, developing new workflows, managing Persons Under Quarantine (PUQ) and difficult situations concerning PUQs, their next of kin, or employers.

My three notable contributions during my MOH secondment were to assist in the following:

- To start up the SIF cell, where it started with a two-man team which evolved to become a more than 30-man team
- To set up the SIF operations workflow that involved engagement of multiple stakeholders
- The Second In-Charge in one of the SIF cells, managing a team of staff overseeing SIF sites' operations

This secondment taught me how to constantly adapt to changes as the COVID-19 situation evolved by the hour and strongly reinforced the importance of being resourceful and agile in managing operations. Overall, it was a rare opportunity for me to be part of a multi-agency national level crisis management team, from which I gained valuable insights on how policies were planned and implemented.

### Managing a Government Quarantine Facility

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Outward Bound Singapore (OBS) campus on Pulau Ubin was activated as a Government Quarantine Facility (GQF) by the Ministry of National Development (MND) on 28 January 2020.

Over a period of 282 days, the OBS GQF was operated by 15 staff who were trained in the MND GQF operational procedures, housed 522 Persons Under Quarantine (PUQs), and served a whopping total of 3,987 meals. The last group of PUQs were decanted from OBS GQF on 29 September 2020, followed by deep cleaning of the premises. OBS relinquished its status as a GQF on 13 November 2020.

As the OBS GQF second in-charge, my main role was to run the day-to-day GQF operations. This included managing people movement and liaising with MND for the distribution of care packages for supporting staff. I also had to coordinate the upkeep of Camp 1 and 2, as well as ensure all essential services were well maintained to support GQF operations.

Due to the nature of our facility, the scope of work supporting GQF operations differed from normal OBS operations. Extra detailing and preparations needed to be done to ensure health and safety were prioritised. Examples were preventing contact between staff and PUQs, and the necessary donning of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when carrying out duties in the GQF. However, movement was restricted due to the PPE and this hindered the execution of tasks such as tree removals and generator maintenance.

Having clear communication with the Managing Agent was crucial as it helped both parties to work closely together and collectively tackle challenges and hurdles that arose during the ten months of operations. I was glad to be able to do my part in the fight against COVID-19, as I had learnt much from managing a GQF operation. This was an unforgettable experience as I learnt to respond to many uncertainties and challenges in operating a GQF.

**Nur Naazira Binte Sazli**  
Senior Executive  
(Partnership Management)

**Allen Goh**  
Senior Manager  
(Partnership Management)

### Safe Distancing Ambassadors

As part of the national effort to fight against COVID-19, Allen, Avena, and Naazira were seconded as Safe Distancing Ambassadors (SDAs) in the Toa Payoh District. The experience allowed them to engage closely with the community and apply their skills in managing members of the public. The two main challenges they faced were:

- Having to keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 rules to adhere to, given how quickly the situation evolved, followed by explaining the updated policies of Safe Management Measures (SMMs) to the public, especially the elderly
- Having to get used to unwanted stares, when they approached members of the public to advise them on SMMs

As SDAs, our staff had the responsibility to ensure that no one loitered around and returned home immediately after completing their errands. Being deployed as SDAs also meant that these three staff had the 'passport' to be 'walking the streets' officially during the Circuit Breaker period. As a result, they saw a side of Singapore that not many Singaporeans got to see – homeless people wandering the streets during the Circuit Breaker.

However, dealing with the homeless people they met required a certain amount of compassion and empathy to understand their current plight. These three staff went the extra mile to understand their plight, and it made a difference to these homeless people, who had sad stories that resulted in them being on the streets.

This SDA experience also gave all three staff reasons to appreciate what they had – a home and family to return to, which was critical during the Circuit Breaker period, where social and emotional support was vital in alleviating feelings of isolation. They also gained valuable insights into the work that went on behind the scenes in safeguarding public health and how every individual had a part to play in the fight against COVID-19.



## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & STEWARDSHIP

OBS aims to be a strong advocate of environmental sustainability and spread awareness on how to minimise the negative impact on the environment. In 2020, OBS successfully impacted our partners in driving environmental sustainability projects that allow youth to make a difference in the environment.

### Project Zero Hero (Alumni)

Project Zero Hero was a 16-month long Alumni project driven by six Leadership & Service Award (LSA) Alumni, in collaboration with Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore School (CPASS). The project aimed to educate CPASS students on the importance of zero waste and to step up as "Zero Heroes". The Project Zero Hero curriculum was designed to span 10 months with sessions consisting of exciting hands-on activities throughout 2020, such as enzyme detergent making and Bokashi composting.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, plans for large-scale face-to-face presentations to the students were replaced with instructional videos and engaging virtual lessons that elicited active participation from the students. Although the initiative has ended, it has kickstarted a new wave of green practices in CPASS. The teachers are now empowered to drive environmental sustainability projects within the school, which include regular Bokashi composting of food waste for their vegapods planted around the school, and incorporating enzyme detergent making into the school's curriculum. As a result, CPASS has reduced its purchase of commercial detergent, which in turn helped to reduce expenditures by up to 80%.

This year, the Project Zero Hero programme will be launched in Rainbow Centre Margaret Drive School and will continue for the second year in CPASS. The support from these special needs schools goes a long way in helping these six LSA Alumni achieve their goal to touch lives and ignite positive environmental changes in the community. OBS is proud of its Alumni ambassadors as they truly embody the OBS motto, 'To Serve, To Strive and Not to Yield!'

### Marine Debris Programme (Alumni)

The Marine Debris Programme marked the first-ever collaboration between OBS Alumni and Better Trails. With the aim of developing a culture of responsible adventure among the outdoor fraternity, 13 Alumni were exposed to the impact of marine debris on the environment and what they as outdoor adventurers could do to mitigate the impact.

The Alumni also learnt how to organise a kayaking clean-up event, where they were meant to organise actual Kayak Clean-up sessions in June and November 2020. However, with the COVID-19 outbreak, both sessions were postponed indefinitely. Nonetheless, the Marine Debris Programme provided the Alumni with deeper knowledge on the impact of marine litter and sparked a passion to be more proactive in doing their part for the environment.



### NParks Training

The collaboration with NParks is part of OBS's commitment to nature conservation, where a series of virtual and physical training activities were conducted for Instructors. The aim was to improve Instructors' ecological literacy of Pulau Ubin and enable them to experience the curated activities related to environmental education that have been implemented in the MOE-OBS Challenge (MOC) programmes.

Highlights of the training included visits to heritage gems such as Teck Seng Place – a little known area in Pulau Ubin and Pekan Quarry's floating wetland, a biodiversity enhancement that provides refuge for many species of fauna. In addition, OBS was roped in to be part of the One Million Trees movement, which may see many participants planting trees in sites exclusive to OBS, once the MOC programmes resume.



## 6. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The need for digital transformation has grown rapidly in recent years. Consequently, OBS has stepped up efforts to leverage on technology wherever feasible to achieve operational excellence, better productivity, and build positive stakeholder experience. Last year, there were several digitalisation efforts that aimed to transform some of our key work processes.

### Integrated Operations Monitoring System (IOMS)

This system was developed with the intent to provide more effective coordination and monitoring of OBS activities in both Singapore and overseas. This will result in real-time monitoring of programmes, participants' ground movements, and vessel deployment. The IOMS's key upgrade was the inclusion of new IOMS handsets that facilitated enhanced reporting between Instructors deployed on the ground and the OBS Operations Room. Other functions also consisted of multi-modal messaging via photos and videos, which is a step-up compared to traditional walkie-talkie sets.

The ability to conduct real-time operations monitoring of expeditions and ground movements on both Pulau Ubin and the mainland, has enabled staff to use real time data for better situational and environmental awareness at a glance. This in turn will enable OBS to make better decisions in terms of potential incident predictions as well as optimised operations planning and deployment. As OBS operations grow, IOMS will build capabilities to store more data for the auto-generation of reports and statistics. IOMS aims to make operations smoother, keep Instructors and participants safer, and respond to incidents faster.



### OBin Ubin Virtual Simulation (Alumni)

29 March 2020 marked the completion of the March Leadership & Service Award (LSA) Alumni's 21-day Classic Challenge Course – just eight days before Singapore commenced Circuit Breaker measures. As a result, the LSA Alumni had to quickly adapt to new measures where the Post-course Service Project (PSP) planning was conducted entirely on Zoom to minimise physical interactions. The project that was slated to take place on 12 September 2020 as a physical event was instead converted to a virtual engagement due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

OBin Ubin was the first-ever virtual project implementation for LSA PSP, and a testimony to the LSA Alumni's resilience to adapt to the fast-evolving situation. Targeted at youth between 17 to

35 years of age interested in contributing towards improving the community and environment in Pulau Ubin, OBin Ubin consisted of 2 components:

- A virtual simulation game
- A panel discussion with representatives from NParks and an environmental social enterprise on issues pertaining to environmental sustainability

The virtual simulation game proved popular with participants and demonstrated potential for further development. As a result, OBS will be conducting OBin Ubin as part of its public engagement efforts to preserve the rich heritage of Pulau Ubin in 2021.



## 6. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



### & TECHNOLOGY



#### Digital Learning Assets

As part of OBS's alignment with the Whole-of-Government initiative towards digital transformation, a Learning

Management System (LMS) was put in place to monitor and assess staff's progress and performance. The LMS aims to align consistency in training, resource content, and training delivery. It also looked to address the scalability of manpower and efficiency of instructor-led training.

A total of six e-modules were created and launched by six different departments. They were:

- Introduction of the Virtual Trunk (VT) App, Handset and Incident Management Procedure
  - Used as an induction/refresher of the importance of the VT Set and Incident Management Procedure for all operational staff
- Sea Safety and Emergency Procedures
  - Conveyed essential knowledge that all staff must know when taking the daily staff trips in and out of Pulau Ubin

The need for digital transformation has grown rapidly in recent years. Consequently, OBS has stepped up efforts to leverage on technology wherever feasible to achieve operational excellence, better productivity, and build positive stakeholder experience. Last year, there were several digitalisation efforts that aimed to transform some of our key work processes.

- OBS Safety Induction Programme
  - Utilised to inculcate and integrate all new staff into OBS's safety management system
- Kayak Orientation Conduct
  - A building block for Trainee Instructors to learn more about the Kayak Orientation conduct without the need to be physically present
- Primary Triage – Introduction to Simple Triage and Rapid Treatment (START) System
  - Offered flexibility for the staff to complete their medical training at their own convenient time, without the need for physical sessions
- E-Inboarding module
  - An interactive digitalised process to orientate all Instructors into the Training Unit

With the adoption of proficiency assessment via e-learning, staff can look forward to a ready platform for learning at one's own pace with materials being more accessible and consistent. This serves to improve the efficiency of manpower among staff as OBS looks to expand its staff strength.

## Data Analytics



#### BIT Performance Predictor

Ever wondered if there was a correlation between the Instructor Selection Process (ISP) performance and the Basic Instructor Training (BIT) performance? This potential correlation may allow for the identification of areas to improve our ISP, and to reduce or eliminate drop-out rates of Trainee Instructors.

Data from the Trainee Instructors' experience and skillsets together with their BIT data have been collected to form a predictive model, the BIT Performance Indicator. This would allow the identification of critical information or requirements from applicants, who may have a potentially higher success rate to pass their BIT. This knowledge would be useful in ensuring that suitable candidates are being shortlisted for the ISP.

In addition, the BIT Performance Indicator could also potentially leverage on existing data to generate predictive trends. One established link would be between the number of leave days taken in comparison to the probability of the Trainee Instructor passing the BIT. Therefore, OBS could take proactive action based on trends identified and perform early interventions where necessary.



#### Training Incident Predictor

The trajectory increase in our participant and staff numbers has gone hand in hand with the expansion of OBS programmes and operations in Pulau Ubin and the mainland. This has led to the need for more informed

management of OBS operations and programmes. To enable OBS to have an informed management system using data analytics, the Training Incident Predictor Project was initiated.

The Training Incident Predictor leverages on data analytics to develop a predictive and prescriptive incident management system that would allow OBS to obtain vital information on ways to better manage programme activities. Both historical and descriptive data would be used to generate insights and forecast trends that aid in incident monitoring and management, such as predicting the likelihood of an incident during a specific month.

Eventually, the Training Incident Predictor Project may move towards prescriptive data, which would find the best course of action using both descriptive and predictive data. In other words, the optimising of the data analytics will provide actionable insights to situations to aid OBS in better incident and programme management.

## 7. ORGANISATION EXCELLENCE



### & STANDARDS

Safety is of utmost importance at OBS. In 2020, OBS improved work efficiencies and productivity by developing systems and frameworks to be globally recognised for excellence in quality and safety management.

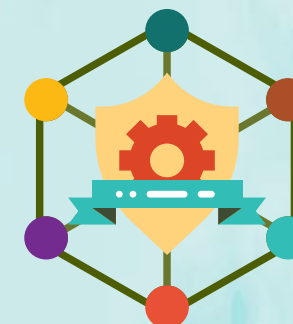
### Workplace Learning Quality Assurance Framework



The Workplace Learning Quality Assurance Framework (WPL QAF) provides a mechanism for the systematic assessment, review, and approval of all Workplace Learning initiatives. This is necessary to ensure quality standardisation and maintain OBS's status as one of the leading training organisations in Singapore.

Through an improved multi-phase process involving detailed pre-planning, design & development, and evaluation, the WPL QAF addresses the ineffective use of time and resources arising from the following:

- Biased definitions of learner needs
- Lack of quality checks in sourcing for learning programmes
- No evaluation or feedback loop for improvement
- Uncertain levels of learning transfer



### Quality & Occupational Health and Safety Management System



With the increase in assets maintenance and logistics support operations, Marine & Logistics Operations (M&LO) has moved towards full outsourcing of management systems. Previously, all maintenance and audits were carried out based on internal standards and were not benchmarked to any National or International standard.

Hence, an external consultant was engaged to implement a Quality & Occupational Health and Safety Management System (QHSMS) that would ensure internal and external statutory compliance requirements. QHSMS would be the quality management system based on adapted international standards such as ISO 9001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 and would facilitate M&LO to consistently maintain operations efficiency and productivity while maintaining high safety standards.





## STAFF VOICES

## SPOTLIGHT ON

## Director of Operations



**Ng Thian Choon**  
Director (Operations)

As Director of Operations, I assist the Executive Director in overseeing the strategic formulation and implementation of OBS operational policies, frameworks, plans and standards to govern crisis and risk management of our programmes and operations. During the COVID-19 period, OBS had 3 main areas of operations to oversee, in which I was involved in:

- I chaired the OBS COVID Task Force to formulate, implement and adjust our business continuity plans in tandem with the government's efforts to manage the national pandemic situation
- For the Government Quarantine Facility in OBS Camp 1, I was mainly involved to explore ways in which the Basic Instructor Training for Trainee Instructors could be carried out despite the quarantine operations
- For the Foreign Workers Temporary Dormitory operations, I was involved in the manpower concept planning as well as policy and tactical supervision of the dormitory operations together with the MOE headquarters team

There are clear parameters in the scope of operations work, but my biggest challenge was learning to live with grey areas and to provide flexibility to meet diverse needs. This was essential in times of rapid change and worked well when grounded in clear rationale, boundaries and limits. With business continuity being a top priority, new work

arrangements such as split teams, virtual meetings, and stakeholders' engagements are inevitable. In this respect, I think OBS did amazingly well, seeing how we have transformed the way we work, share, meet and engage with staff.

My biggest concern was the uncertainties my staff had to face in these challenging times and how they coped with balancing home and work priorities when they worked from home. I tried to alleviate their pressure by prioritising tasks with clarity when chairing the OBS COVID Task Force so that we could implement and communicate clear guidelines. I also tried to moderate my staff's workload and step in to support them if necessary. Lastly, I emphasised that work communications should not go beyond work hours and/or into weekends unless necessary.

My biggest takeaway for 2020 was that leaders must step up to provide direction for the way forward in times of change and uncertainty, where staff must be empowered to effect and sustain the change. Leaders should also acknowledge vulnerabilities when encountering overwhelming challenges and be open to seek support from peers and colleagues to jointly find solutions together.

I was both nervous and excited about the 19-day Singapore Police Force (SPF) programme as I was going to be meeting a new group of individuals on top of conducting my first long-duration programme. As this was the first programme that OBS was conducting after the Circuit Breaker, there were many things to digest, plan, prepare and execute, to ensure the safety of the participants under my care and myself.

One of my initial challenges was preparing for this programme in accordance with the Safe Management Measures (SMMs). This meant coordinating with twice the number of Instructors than normal and catering for additional logistical requirements. For instance, there was stringent face mask-wearing rules to adhere to and the requirement for all participants to have an individual dry

bag containing their own hand sanitiser and other SMM items.

While navigating these additional measures, I found that effective communication was the key to ensuring a smooth and successful programme, as it helped me to overcome challenges and issues along the way. Investing in open communication via a feedback system with both participants and fellow Instructors smoothened the process and was ultimately a timely reminder for me to reflect, grow and understand myself and others.

Lastly, I was grateful for having a buddy, who shared the same frequency with me and was just as committed to making our SPF Instructor 'buddyship' work!

## SPOTLIGHT ON

## Singapore Police Force Programme Instructor

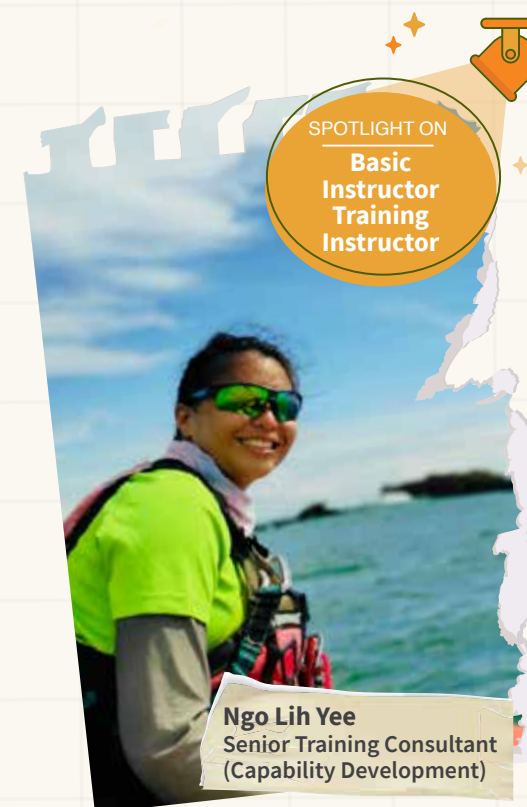


**Desiree Ho**  
Instructor



## SPOTLIGHT ON

## Basic Instructor Training Instructor



**Ngo Lih Yee**  
Senior Training Consultant  
(Capability Development)

When Circuit Breaker measures kicked in, Basic Instructor Training (BIT) was carried out individually as everyone was pretty much working from home. As Instructors, we were concerned about how BIT could be maximised as the Trainee Instructors faced certain inevitable constraints at home. Therefore, there was a sense of relief and excitement when it was announced that BIT could resume.

However, that sense of relief and excitement was somewhat short-lived when I realised the amount of uncertainty surrounding the resumption of training, even within OBS's own campus. In addition, being one of the first few training programmes to resume, the implementation of the Safe Management Measures was going to set the foundation on how they were to be exercised in other programmes.

My biggest takeaway from conducting BIT during COVID-19 was that adaptability was the name of the game. Hence, it was important to use technology to my advantage and always keep communication lines open. What saw me through some of my toughest challenges was having an open mind and being quick to change.

Due to COVID-19, BIT transformed into a mode of blended learning, which consisted of topics being delivered both physically and virtually. This meant that Trainee Instructors were expected to be independent learners, such that all physical training sessions moved at a faster pace and provided more hands-on opportunities for everyone.

My professional experience consisted of working on projects such as the Singapore Formula 1 Grand Prix and being part of the pioneer team at the Singapore Sports Hub. I had always wanted an outlet to share my passion and enthusiasm for sports and the great outdoors while imparting the knowledge I had gained over the years to make a difference in someone else's life. When I came across the opportunity to join as an OBS instructor, I jumped at the chance and my first day of work was on 21 September 2020.

Undergoing Basic Instructor Training (BIT) during the COVID-19 period with stringent Safe Management Measures presented its own unique set of issues. For one, I had to keep reminding myself to put on my mask

after exercising! However, breaking habits is something that I would be doing as a future Instructor, hence this was the perfect opportunity to look inward and start with myself first.

BIT was not without its frustrations, but I kept an open mind, stayed calm and adopted a positive attitude to focus on the things that matter – which was the friendships and bonds forged with my batchmates. To top it off, the OBS community's warmth and enthusiasm made me feel pumped to show up for work every day, and I just cannot wait to see OBS hitting its "normal" strides in the new norm.

## SPOTLIGHT ON

## Trainee Instructor



**Argyrios Daskalopoulos**  
Trainee Instructor





**Clement Lim**  
Deputy Director (PSOEB)  
Ministry of Education

"Grateful to your team that went out of the way to build genuine relationship with the migrant workers...during the C+, it was evident the team was well prepared and they handled the isolation as if they had done it many times..."

"...the team dealt with C+ cases with so much composure that it is the only site I need not go down to observe..."



**Mrs Koh-Lim Ai Lay**  
Principal  
Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore School

"We decided to collaborate with the OBS LSAAumni as we wanted to explore partnerships, which could give students learning experiences beyond the classrooms. Project Zero Hero involved a lot of hands-on learning experiences such as the making of enzyme detergent and designing of tote bags, which worked well for our students as they were mostly kinaesthetic learners. The collaboration between CPASS and the OBS Alumni does not end here – an expanded OBS Alumni team will be continuing the collaboration with us in 2021, diving deeper into the content that has been shared in 2020."

# QUOTES FROM



# STAKEHOLDERS



**LTC Ow Yong Tuck Wah**  
Head Frontline Operations  
Training Centre (FOTC)  
Civil Defence Academy (CDA)  
Singapore Civil Defence Force

"We are glad to see that OBS Instructors are professionals, with the same view to groom young leaders such as those in the SCDF section commander course (SCC) and Rota Commander Course (RCC)."



**Eric Chua**  
Parliamentary Secretary  
(MCCY and MSF)

"Keep up the good work in building people and communities of grit and character!"



**Fay Chan**  
Assistant Director  
(Strategy Management, R&SM)  
Ministry of National Development

"We really appreciate all the help from the colleagues from NYC and OBS, working with us since Jan 2020 and going the extra mile to help out for special operations and through the super peak period at the height of the dorm infections. We would not have made it thus far without your very strong support!"



**Noraliza (Lyn) Taha**  
Deputy Home Manager  
Darul Ihsan Orphanage

"Thanks for letting the participants have a positive programme experience as they are now showing a more can-do attitude."

**To Serve, To Strive  
And Not To Yield**





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