

# Migrasia Global Solutions Limited

Enhancement of Victim Identification and Support  
Services





## **Migrasia Enhancement of Victim Identification and Support Services**

**Problem Statement:** Within Hong Kong there are more than 390,000 foreign domestic workers, mainly from the Philippines and Indonesia. The vast majority of these workers are brought to Hong Kong via a non-transparent regime of agents, with many workers being exploited as a result. Various international NGOs and governments, including the US government via its annual TIP Report, identify Hong Kong as a source and transit jurisdiction for human trafficking and bonded labor. Unfortunately, most victims are identified only after the exploitation occurs, making enforcement of laws and punishing the guilty parties difficult, if not impossible.

**Migrasia's Solution:** Our team has spent the last two years building a robust, technology enhanced victim identification system and with the requested funding we are in a prime position to expand our platform for maximum impact.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more background information about Migrasia, please view the document [here](#). This document includes basic company information such as: directors, staff, company formation, and historical operations.

## Migrasia Victim Identification System Summary

Migrasia has developed a cyclical system consisting of four interrelated components that allow Migrasia to identify victims, provide support to victims, collect information, and improve the support services offered by all stakeholders.

This system is unique within the migrant worker industry, particularly in terms of the way we use data and social media to identify victims and tirage cases. The process has been designed as a positive feedback loop - data generated and collected from each of the four components improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the other components, which in turn increases the quality and quantity of data and results throughout all system components.

For example:

1. Data about bad agencies can be collected by the Legal Clinic and then carefully shared on social media in order to source and triage additional victims and complainants;
2. Data from social media and the legal clinic will be used to produce research and case reports which can be used as the foundation for government and non-government training; and
3. Case reports and information shared with government and non-government partners can subsequently be used to source additional victims and complainants via crafted social media posts.

### Illustration:

#### [Diagram of System Operation and Components](#)



## System Components

### Component 1 - Victim Sourcing & Triage

#### Victim Sourcing

Migrasia sources actionable tips about illicit activity that are indicative of trafficking or unscrupulous industry behavior. Tips and information are sent to us via social media from a variety of sources, including: migrant workers, volunteers, employers, members of the public, and industry contacts. The tips include information such as receipts from overcharging, business cards, contracts, screenshots of conversations, audio and video recordings, placement documents, agency information, etc.

The first step in this process is for Migrasia to post crafted social media posts that provoke engagements. Posts are carefully crafted to be relatable to and engageable by migrant workers. Special care is taken to ensure the format, style, timing, and language of each post evokes engagement, tips, and useful information from migrant workers who are then triaged to identify victims and determine the most appropriate avenue of assistance.

[Here is a diagram](#) of our social media victim identification and triage system. We have five main Facebook pages and three Facebook groups through which we source the vast majority of our preliminary data and engage with potential trafficking victims. Currently these pages focus on reporting and reviewing employment agencies in Hong Kong. This was a strategic decision because almost all migrant workers have had at least one complaint about their employment agency and they are much more willing to voice complaints against their agency, compared to voicing complaints about their employer. We are expanding to create specific pages about agencies in the Philippines and Indonesia, in Tagalog and Bahasa respectively.

Combined, our social media pages have hundreds of thousands of members, receive **over two million engagements each month**, and are growing quickly. This level of engagement has been obtained organically without the purchase of advertising. However, by including paid advertising we can reach millions more and become the go-to source for information, alerts, and support for any agency or migration problem throughout Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, and eventually all of Asia.

Our social media pages and growing reach provide an unprecedented level of transparency and information that is easily engageable and digestible by the most important audience: migrant workers. Being able to engage with millions of migrant workers gives Migrasia an unsurpassed ability to collect data, talk to migrant workers, empower them through information, and refer victims to the appropriate avenues for recourse, whether that be our own legal clinic, a government office, another NGO or partner.



### Victim Triage Process

In order to deal with the social media engagements from migrant workers, we have designed a victim triage and intake system. Our intake process is designed to effectively identify victims, inform them on the relevant information, and advise on an appropriate course of action via intake into our legal clinic, referral to an NGO, or by providing necessary information and standardized guides to satisfy the worker's inquiry. During the triage process, advanced high impact but complex cases are given special consideration and referred to our legal clinic for follow-up. Simple non-precedent setting cases are usually referred to other NGOs for assistance. Throughout the process we never stop collecting data.

To further visualize this, [here is a link](#) to our triage process that allows our staff, volunteers, and the future virtual assistants to effectively receive, triage, and refer hundreds of victims to the appropriate help services each week.

### Case Study: Impact over four weeks in May 2019

This model has proven to be extremely effective. During **the past four weeks**, our social media operations have received **over 2 million engagements, tens of thousands of comments, and thousands of information points** such as PDOS records, business cards, training fees, agency information, etc. Furthermore, our team has helped triage over 2,156 incoming inquiries including 906 direct Facebook page messages and 1,250 individuals who engaged with our page posts requesting assistance and subsequently received assistance via our Messenger group chats. Our trained team of social media administrators (all of whom are migrant workers) received direct messages from over 1,006 individuals seeking one-on-one advice and referral services rather than messaging our page or discussing in group chats. These numbers illustrate the importance of training migrant workers and giving them the ability, knowledge, and toolset to identify, assist, and refer victims within their own social networks.

### Migrant Worker Empowerment within the Triage Framework

To further leverage the ability of community leaders to assist within their own social reach, we will be hosting 16 training sessions over the next 24 months for migrant workers who want to be volunteer administrators of our Facebook operations or utilize our tools, content, guides, and data tracking systems to assist people individually within their own networks.

A survey of our current social media volunteers shows that on average our volunteer team contributes 166 hours of work per week on our social media pages, groups, and group chats. Given the volume of continuous inquiries and the need for organized data collection, it is necessary to hire at least two virtual assistants to provide further support to our social media operations. These virtual assistants should be able to speak Tagalog and Bahasa in order to improve communication for non-English inquiries and engagements.

*To continue the expansion it is critical to obtain funding for the **hiring of remote virtual assistants**. This is especially important because many of our current volunteers are migrant workers themselves and only have limited hours during the day which they can assist. To further facilitate this process we are creating additional manuals and guides for our virtual assistants so they can quickly and easily assist in posting, engagement, triage, referral, and data collection activities.*

## **Component 2 - Legal Clinic Support**

To ensure individuals who are identified as victims have access to the in-person legal support they may need, Migrasia will be opening a legal clinic. This legal clinic will provide all of the services, support, and advice of other NGOs, but have the flexibility to focus on highly impactful, often resource intensive cases that have the ability to change the migrant worker employment agency industry. Migrasia will have a legal clinic office and online website in order to assist victims, the majority of which will be referred to the clinic via the social media victim identification process. The legal clinic will also serve as the referring entity or source of additional legal assistance from lawyers.

The legal clinic will:

- Empower hundreds of migrant workers per year by informing them about their rights and the relevant Hong Kong laws and providing guidance on how to navigate the legal avenues for seeking redress.
- Identify and follow-through on highly impactful cases that could lead to:
  - An unscrupulous agency/agent being prosecuted;
  - A highly predatory agency being shut down, convicted, or going out of business; (normally involving numerous complainants against an unlicensed agency and a clear pattern of exploitative practices)
  - Systemic change in the recruitment industry including a more stringent licensing process and regulations;
  - Useful and positive legal precedent that can provide guidance in building up cases against other illegal actors in the industry;
  - Increased awareness through significant media attention that could drive positive change;
  - Deterrence to unethical and illegal behavior within the industry; and
  - An increase in awareness among migrant workers that would lead to reduced incidences of debt bondage and exploitation by unscrupulous agencies.
- Assist migrant workers with filing complaints to authorities and guiding them through the complaint, interview, and prosecution process. We aim to contribute to at least 15 convictions over the next 24 months;

- Provide a flexible channel where domestic workers can seek and receive pro-bono services and legal representation provided by solicitors, barristers, law firms, and pro bono legal service providers;
- Build partnerships with other NGOs, private corporations, law firms, and legal professionals to provide additional victim assistance.

### Legal Clinic Leadership and Support

Although the legal clinic we are proposing is new, we have been engaged in this type of work for decades. In fact, leading the clinic will be Migrasia team member Holly Allan, formerly the General Manager of HELP for Domestic Workers, which post she held for nearly two decades. Holly is largely considered the most experienced migrant worker case manager, and has helped thousands of workers explore solutions to their legal and other challenges.

The Migrasia Legal Clinic has been supported by students from the University of Hong Kong, including law students from the Global Migration Legal Clinic (GMLC) co-taught by David Bishop and Lindsay Ernst. Batches of students help with case in-take and research, and provide other administration related support during the school term. In order to minimize disruption resulting from frequent changes in personnel, it is proposed that a full-time assistant be employed to provide continuity and consistency as well as improved coordination of victim assistance.

### Case Study: Successful Cases

Even though the legal clinic has not become fully operational, since the summer of 2018, Migrasia has been dedicating significant resources and time to assisting victims pursue highly impactful cases. Although we currently do not have full time staff dedicated to case support we have been able to take on these difficult cases that others are not willing to take. Thus far we have been extremely successful in obtaining compensation for victims, securing criminal convictions, and driving bad acting agencies to go out of business or improve their practices.

In the past 12 months, we have helped victims obtain over 750,000 HKD in compensation and obtained multiple agency convictions. As an example of how powerful our process can be, after identifying numerous victims on social media, starting in October 2018, Migrasia assisted 9 victims in the agency complaint process and prepared them to be prosecution witnesses. As a result of our efforts, the bad acting agency was convicted and ordered to pay the [largest ever criminal penalty along with over 60,000 HKD in compensation to the victims.](#)

Presently, Migrasia is assisted groups of victims who have been identified via social media on a number of similar cases and expect to obtain similar if not larger judgements within the next year. As a characteristic of using social media as our first point of contact is via social media, it is very common for



us to engage with large groups of victims seeking assistance for the same or similar problems.

For example, Migrasia is assisting 81 victims of a bad acting [money lender that withheld their passports as collateral](#). Due to the ability to swiftly identify and communicate with victims, Migrasia was able to assist and coordinate with law enforcement **which led to the recovery of roughly 1,400 passports in a time period of less than 2 months**. This case is actively developing and we expect additional news and prosecutions to manifest shortly. As a result of our assistance, it is expected that the bad acting money lender and their partner agency will not be allowed to obtain renew their operating licenses.

In addition, Migrasia also assisted three victims escape from very serious situations of bonded labour and successfully led them through the criminal and civil complaints processes. Our team also assisted these victims to be screened by the IOM and were independently confirmed to be victims of human trafficking. With the support of Migrasia these victims were able to obtain compensation, pursue criminal charges against their agency, and navigate the complicated multi-department system that Hong Kong uses when dealing with complex human trafficking cases. With additional funding Migrasia will be able to take on more of these highly complex cases and assist more victims of trafficking. For each of these cases Migrasia assisted the victims with over 8 distinct steps including: EAA interviews, police interviews, immigration interviews, labour tribunal cases, consular/overseas labour office assistance, IOM victim screening, boarding house support, and processing a new VISA after finding a new employer.

The aggregate results of Migrasia's work from June 2018 to December 2018 can be [viewed here](#). Because the investigation and prosecution of agencies can take 6-18 months we expect the number of convictions, agency license revocations, and arrests to increase significantly over the next year as a result of cases that were started in 2018. These criminal cases will act as a significant deterrent against unethical agency operations and allow newer, smarter, and more transparent agencies to provide ethical placement services.

### **Component 3 - Research and Case Reports**

#### *Case Reports for Law Enforcement Reports and Case Studies*

Over the past 2 years Migrasia has significantly contributed to a number of high-impact cases. Many of the cases were previously left dormant and ignored until Migrasia reviewed the case and created highly organized law enforcement reports. These reports usually exceed 200 pages of evidence collected over 6-12 months and organized into a highly actionable dossiers that are shared with law enforcement to encourage prompt action and enforcement against bad actors. Upon request Migrasia is willing to share PDF copies of the previous binders that were previously put together and shared with law enforcement.

Based on current and future cases, it is expected that Migrasia will organize at least 16 detailed investigation binders consisting of 100+ pages of surveillance, analysis, statements, evidence, and clear explanations of the illegal schemes that are ongoing. In fact, Migrasia already has evidence for





seven high impact and high complexity cases but at present does not have the manpower to organize this evidence into actionable binders. To make use of the evidence and information collected Migrasia needs funding to hire part time analysts, topography designers, researchers, and paying for copying/binding.

In addition to reporting the case binders to relevant law enforcement, the binders and case information can be shared with LegCo, the Hong Kong Ombudsman, POLO, the Philippines CIDG/POEA, the US TIP Office, media partners, and other stakeholders that can use our information to push for system change and more aggressive prosecution.

Investigation binders will also be shared with private sector partners such as HSBC, Standard Chartered, and other financial institutions, so that they can conduct additional due diligence on their clients and freeze or close the bank accounts of any bad-acting agencies or illegal recruitment facilitators.

Upon the conclusion of novel or precedent setting cases, Migrasia will also author and publish case studies, likely in partnership with educational institutions such as The University of Hong Kong.

#### *Agency-Money Lender Research and Reports*

During the development and optimization of our operations we have discovered that simple company and business records searches will reveal prima facie evidence of illegal activity. Furthermore, we have developed a process for analyzing and reporting these violations to Hong Kong and Philippines law enforcement departments in a very effective manner.

***Migrasia proposes the purchase of all annual returns or business registrations of all agencies and money lenders*** in order to:

1. Analyze the corporate records for fraud, fake information, or Companies Ordinance violations;
2. Aggregate the information into a searchable database and visualization tools and integrate the information into our suspicious activity detection systems; and
3. Publish our findings and allow governments, NGOs, and others to use the data for research and analysis.

The purchasing of all relevant records for 1,440 employment agencies and 2,152 money lenders will cost 84,052 HKD. After obtaining the records, Migrasia will conduct analysis on the documents. We estimate that the results of this analysis should detect:

1. 100+ violations of the HK Companies Ordinance;
2. 30 instances of violation of POLO or POEA accreditation rules;
3. 20 instances of collusion between money lenders and employment agencies; and



4. Other suspicious and likely illegal activity such as an employment agency failing to inform the EAA of its updated operating address;

After analysis Migrasia will submit suspicious activity to relevant government authorities, including POLO, EAA, and the Companies Registry. The submission of direct complaints is estimated to result in:

1. At least 20 agencies being shut down (loss of license or suspended POLO accreditation) or going out of business; and
2. At least 100 Companies Ordinance investigations which can result in significant regulatory fines that may pressure the bad acting agency to go out of business.

In addition to sharing the data with government regulators, we can leverage our connections with banks, such as HSBC and Standard Chartered to:

1. Submit reports of suspicious company activity which may lead to the bank accounts of the suspicious agency being suspended or closed; and
2. Provide risk data sets so that financial institutions such as HSBC and Standard Chartered can adapt their risk scores that they assign companies within the migrant worker industry - and if necessary close or freeze their accounts due to the calculated risk of human trafficking.

After the purchase and analysis of these records Migrasia can create a case study on the analysis of agencies and money lenders via corporate records and expand this research to other jurisdictions such as the Philippines, Indonesia, etc. These case studies will help improve data analysis as well as investigation strategies and practices throughout the region. Furthermore, journalists from the New York Times and other prominent media outlets have already expressed interest in publishing a story on the results of our proposed analysis.

#### **Component 4 - Education & Engagement With Stakeholders**

##### *Social Media and Community Leader Training*

According to projections, by 2100 over one billion people will undergo migration within Asia. Our small but efficient team can only reach a fraction of those individuals. To increase the reach of our victim identification and support system, Migrasia will empower others to conduct victim identification and educate them on the proper channels for assistance and problem resolution. Currently, Migrasia has trained over 20 migrant workers to be social media volunteer administrators. They are able to identify, assist, and refer victims within their social network. Migrasia intends to significantly expand these empowerment and education operations.

In order to increase reach and impact, Migrasia will formalize the training courses for our social media volunteer administrators and allow individuals from throughout the community to join. Migrasia will teach individuals about our platform (pages, groups, groups chat), posting content, victim identification,



victim assistance, and victim referral processes. We already have significant demand for social media administrator training and plan to run 8 training sessions per year with an average of 20 volunteers per session. These volunteers will be given the opportunity to assist in administering our social media operations or use their learned skills to assist others via their own social media network. The result of these trainings will be a significant increase in our reach, engagement, and opportunities for victims to seek assistance.

### Law Enforcement Training

Lack of effective law enforcement case intake and investigation is a significant obstacle to permanent industry improvement. In far too many cases, law enforcement is unable to effectively assist victims due to inadequate training or overly burdensome criminal complaint intake procedures.

During the case intake and support process, Migrasia routinely coordinates and assists victims to arrange appointments with law enforcement agencies such as the Labour Department, Employment Agencies Administration, Police Department, and Immigration Department. To ensure these law enforcement agencies can effectively intake complaints and pursue prosecutions. Over the next 24 months Migrasia plans to host 8 training sessions for front line police staff regarding illegal agency and money lenders, relevant ordinance, and the modus operandi of bad industry actors. Given adequate funding, Migrasia expects to train between 300 and 400 front line police staff and develop long term relationships with senior police officers and police detectives.

Building long term partnerships with law enforcement officers will allow us and our partners to more effectively coordinate information for high priority cases. Indeed, after relationships are established, we expect to be able to provide the police with our investigation reports to trigger direct and immediate police action. Building the appropriate contacts with law enforcement officers would significantly increase the ability to shutdown illegal operations swiftly - rather than relying on the victim to go through a multi-step complaint process that can take months or years while facing discouragement by the authorities at every step.

In addition to training police, Migrasia has been invited by the Philippines Overseas Labour Office (POLO) to provide training to their agency complaint and welfare officers. Migrasia will develop manuals and policies for POLO to more effectively manage the intake of agency or welfare cases. In addition to these manuals and policies, Migrasia will train POLO staff to utilize digital case tracking systems. The transition from paper-based case management to digital case management will increase the efficiency of POLO and provide enhanced data usability. POLO will have unprecedented capability to monitor agency behavior, implement data-driven government policies, and provide improve assistance to the 200,000 Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong.

As with our other initiatives Migrasia aims to not only to improve our own operations but to improve the operations and effectiveness of all NGOs, government departments, and stakeholders who play a role



in combating trafficking and exploitation.

### Community Engagement

In partnership with POLO Migrasia will create a series of educational videos for newly arrived domestic workers. According to POLO rules, all newly arrived domestic workers must undergo a Post Arrival Orientation Session (PAOS) within 30 days of arriving in Hong Kong. With funding, Migrasia will produce the education videos and content that will make up the new online PAOS system. With the creation of this content and mandatory participation in PAOS, all newly arrived Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong will be introduced to our content and support services. This will ensure that victims know their rights and are familiar with avenues to seek assistance as soon as they arrive in Hong Kong. Important information and data such as Facebook name, fees paid, agency name, phone number, and other information will be collected via the online PAOS system. The collection of data will allow POLO to implement smarter and more effective regulatory policies and more effectively communicate with Filipino domestic workers. In collaboration with POLO this information will allow for real-time 'check-ins' with workers, the distribution of surveys to collect data, and real-time assistance to workers. As a result, all newly arrived Filipino domestic workers will be introduced to our social media operations. As a result, Migrasia will have additional data and increased ability to engage with all newly arrived Filipino domestic workers for victim identification and support services. Upon successful completion, this system can be integrated into the systems of the Indonesian Consulate or other Consulates in the future.

To further community engagement, partnerships with stakeholders, and public awareness, Migrasia plans to host at least four public events and press releases/conferences where we will showcase our findings on illegal activity, advocate for improved enforcement by stakeholders, launch our documentaries, and conduct other activities to engage with our public and private partners.

### Story Telling

Migrasia's victim identification and support services allow for concentrated pressure on bad industry actors and encourage the development of mutually beneficial partnerships throughout the public and private sector.

In furtherance of Migrasia's mission of combating trafficking, Migrasia has developed a number of documentary storylines that will illustrate the growing problems faced by migrant workers, governments, and private companies as it relates to trafficking in Asia. To facilitate the production and publication of these stories, Migrasia is in need of funding for computer, software, and video equipment as well as production services that will allow Migrasia to create and distribute numerous high-quality documentaries that can appeal to selected audiences.

Migrasia already has terabytes of video footage from interviews and investigations and intends to produce 2-4 documentaries with a length of 20-30 minutes. In addition to the documentaries, Migrasia

actively works with investigative journalists and news outlets to publish information about cases, frauds, and worrisome trends within the migration industry. Migrasia will continue these storytelling activities and produce them in a medium that sparks the interest of employers, migrants, and governments.

### Media Links

For impactful cases, Migrasia routinely works with media partners to ensure that migrant workers, employers, NGOs, law enforcement, and even agencies are aware of what is going on within the migrant worker industry.

The following stories are some of the media stories that Migrasia and our team were directly involved in. One of our core focuses is on storytelling: unless the public knows about a case, its power is limited. We work closely with journalists and filmmakers in multiple countries to tell the stories of our victims and hopefully stop others from being injured in the same way.

- <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-law-and-crime/article/2155292/data-lays-bar-e-hidden-links-hong-kongs>
- <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/2135565/hong-kong-slow-act-suspected-money-laundering-scheme-duped>
- <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/2093836/study-finds-hong-kong-domestic-helpers-subjected-employment>
- <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/hong-kong/article/2162485/why-hong-kongs-reputation-human-trafficking-black>
- <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2138411/hong-kongs-errant-domestic-helper-agencies-are-everywhere>
- <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2093946/domestic-workers-hong-kong-are-merciless-agencies-why>
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- <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/2141486/student-activists-barred-last-minute-duterte-gathering-hong-kong>
- <http://www.sunwebhk.com/2016/07/emrys-manager-claims-being-duped-by-42.html>
- <http://www.sunwebhk.com/2016/07/emrys-new-dh-recruits-in-limbo.html>
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- <http://www.sunwebhk.com/2018/04/hk-police-elevates-case-vs-ester-ylagan.html>
- <http://www.sunwebhk.com/2019/06/police-seize-record-1400-passports-from.html>