2021

IMPACT
REPORT

Migrasia Global Solutions Ltd.

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LETTER FROM THE TEAM

Greetings from the Team at Migrasia!

2021 was a year of extraordinary determination, perseverance, and growth for Migrasia. Despite the uncertainty and increased challenges that carried over from 2020, we expanded our reach, our services, our partnerships, and our team to better serve the region's migrant communities. We continue to be inspired by the resilience and positivity of the individuals we serve.

With migrant workers continuing to face significant vulnerability due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Migrasia's client support services team embraced every new day as an opportunity to create positive change in someone's life, and for our community. We are proud to highlight that Migrasia's client support services team engaged over 2,210,000 migrant workers globally via social media, online, and in-person services. These engagements helped to educate and provide resources to prevent exploitation.

Migrasia's programs have led to direct assistance of tens of thousands of migrant workers in countries throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe. At the close of 2021, Migrasia's success rate in monetary recoveries and blocked illegal proceeds rose to over **HK$280,800,000** since 2018.

This 2021 Impact Report updates our stakeholders on the past year's milestones and achievements. As a supporter and friend of migrant workers, we invite you to learn more and join in our next phase of growth. Migrasia's work depends on the support of many generous individuals and organizations. Whatever the size or nature of your contribution, it makes a difference, and we are grateful for you and your support.

We have grown more than ever in our reach, impact and partnerships, and we remain committed to building a more positive future for all migrants. We hope you will continue with us in this fight, as we seek to eliminate the pervasive and systemic exploitation of migrant workers!

Sincerely,
The Migrasia Team

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

2021 was a record year for Migrasia. We onboarded and supported more clients than ever before through our social media triage system, providing assistance to 14,000+ clients online and 1,400+ in-person. We had significant success across the enforcement category, filing over 3,000 complaints and submitting 120 reports to authorities, leading to the recovery or blocking of approximately **HK$200,000,000** in illegal proceeds for our clients. Lastly, we continued to deliver innovative research, producing the first business school case study on forced labour and receiving funding to use advanced data techniques in order to create a tool that accurately captures social media engagement.

Enforcement

Approximately **HK$200,000,000** in illegal recruitment proceeds recovered or blocked in 2021, equivalent to **3,615 years** of unpaid labor

36+ convictions, prosecutions and administrative actions

3,000+ complaints filed

120 reports submitted on suspected labour abuses
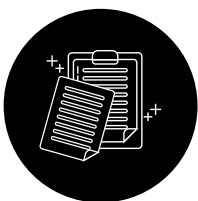
Client Support

2,210,000 migrant workers assisted through our social media triage system

14,000+ individual clients supported online

1,400+ individual clients supported in-person

600+ case referrals

Research and Thought Leadership

4 case studies on forced labour and human trafficking published in collaboration with The University of Hong Kong

1 presentation of high-impact research to Philippines government

OVERVIEW OF MIGRASIA

Migrasia is a tax-exempt social enterprise incubator for solutions to migration-related problems in Asia. We focus on a wide-range of issues ranging from unethical labor migration to modern slavery and human trafficking. Migrasia leverages technology, novel legal strategies, and knowledge sharing to promote change within the labour migration industry at large. In collaboration with the Global Migration Legal Clinic within The University of Hong Kong's Faculty of Law, Migrasia has reached millions of current, former, and prospective migrant workers through our social media triage system. Migrasia's programs have led to direct assistance of thousands of migrant workers in countries throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Context

Every year, migrant domestic workers across Asia face information asymmetry and structural disadvantages that put them at risk of labor abuse. The process begins with recruitment agencies, which are often given a monopoly over a worker's migration journey because of the administrative and legislative burden associated with working abroad. This creates a situation where migrant domestic workers are systemically vulnerable to labor exploitation and abuse, leading to many instances of working conditions akin to forced labour, debt bondage caused by excessive fees incurred during the migration journey, ineffective complaint and grievance procedures, restrictions on freedom of movement, isolation, and limited access to justice.

Mission

Migrasia seeks to eliminate the pervasive and systemic exploitation of migrant workers around the globe. Migrasia achieves its mission through (i) direct client support to victims of human trafficking and debt bondage over social media and via our in-person clinic; (ii) enforcement of anti-trafficking laws and investigation of unethical migration intermediaries; (iii) and primary research into anti-trafficking interventions and migration solutions. Data aggregation and analysis are integral across Migrasia's core programmes, providing essential evidence-based inputs that fuel programme activities. Clinical work and observations then form the foundation for Migrasia's thought leadership and community engagement within the migration field to promote education, knowledge sharing, and collaborative solutions.

Migrasia's Cyclical System

Client Support

- Access to information & education
- Social media victim identification and support
- Victim triage and referral
- Data and evidence collection

Education & Community Engagement

- Trainings for migrant workers
- Training for government, civil society & stakeholders
- Community outreach & advocacy
- Information sharing

DATA

Enforcement & Remediation

- Case analysis for legal violations
- Access to remediation
- High-impact case work and strategic litigation
- Law enforcement reports
- Legal partner referrals

Research & Thought Leadership

- Primary & secondary research
- Addressing information gaps
- Social media research
- Authoring case studies & educational materials

Migrasia achieves its mission through a cyclical system that combines 4 main, interrelated components:

1. The mass identification of potential victims through social media and other advanced data techniques, such as network mapping of recruitment agencies and their subsidiaries
2. Providing support to the victims identified, both online and in-person through the Global Migration Legal Clinic; referral of cases to legal partners and law enforcement agencies
3. Collecting and documenting information about the experiences of our clients and publishing research on our findings
4. Engaging the community through education and by presenting our findings to key stakeholders in government and other NGOs, to improve the support services offered to migrant domestic workers

These four pillars form the basis of our Theory of Change.

This cyclical system is unique within the migrant worker industry, particularly in terms of how Migrasia uses data and social media to identify and empower victims, triage cases and engage the target groups. The process has been designed as a positive feedback loop between the four components, and allows us to leverage all of our partnerships and expertise to the fullest extent.

Migrasia's Cyclical System

Client Support

Online Client Support

Migrasia uses social media as the key avenue for reaching its beneficiaries, and our social media channels include a network of Facebook pages, Facebook groups and Messenger Chats. Our online client support programme aims to empower victims and potential victims of trafficking and debt bondage by providing actionable information to prevent exploitation. This includes information about redress mechanisms, written and video support guides, and where appropriate and necessary, referrals to our in-person clinic or other civil society organisations for further tailored assistance. Our victim identification and triage process adopts a beneficiary-driven strategy, as our social media operations are primarily managed by volunteer migrant workers who have been trained on victim identification and client intake.

In-Person Client Support

Migrasia's in-person clinic provides highly specialised assistance to victims of exploitation by unethical migration intermediaries through a range of redress mechanisms that enable victims to directly enforce their rights. Our main avenues for assistance include:

- Direct communication with unethical migration intermediaries to enforce the rights of victims by way of sending demand letters, cease and desist letters, data access requests and other civil redress mechanisms;
- Providing support letters and assisting victims in communicating with employers to encourage transparency, support, mutual understanding and in many cases, to prevent termination of employment due to harassment by agencies, lenders and debt collectors;
- In some instances, assisting employers in sending cease and desist letters to lenders and debt collectors to prevent further harassment.

Enforcement & Remediation

The use of technology driven data aggregation methods has enabled Migrasia to detect large-scale labour trafficking and debt bondage syndicates. Migrasia has developed novel, intelligence driven strategies to conduct investigations, enforce the law and hold unethical migration intermediaries accountable. By detecting suspected violations and sharing the findings with government and non-government stakeholders through case reports, Migrasia has been able to target a range of actors who often hide behind networks of corporate entities, to create industry-wide impact.

Research & Thought Leadership

We conduct primary research to address information gaps in migration literature and identify anti-trafficking intervention points for action. We aggregate, analyze and share data to provide transparency and certainty.

Education & Community Engagement

We disseminate information and resources to those who are vulnerable and in the process of migration. Helping them navigate through the process while undersatnding their rights.

The following pages describe our work with respect to each component of the cyclical system for the year 2021

CLIENT SUPPORT

Virtual Analysts

We continued the expansion of our essential network of frontline support workers by adding a virtual analyst working on the ground in the Philippines in 2021. Below is an example of a case that our VA identified and triaged, leading to a successful outcome.

Case Example

Migrasia was recently asked to look into the case of a migrant domestic worker from the Philippines who became uncontactable while on placement in the Middle East. Friends and family sought help once she became unreachable to them via the usual communication channels.

The worker was transferred to a different employer through subsidiaries of her recruitment agency. Her new employer did not maintain consistent contact with the worker's original recruitment agency, as well as failing to follow through with agreements to bring the worker for monitoring by POLO officials. Efforts to reach the migrant worker failed as she was relocated to a remote location with little access to digital means of communication, according to her employer. She was also moved to a different location than the one stated in her contract.

Migrasia followed her case closely, getting into contact with her recruitment agency, the POEA Prosecution Division and the Anti-Corruption Commission of the Philippines. In response, the Philippines subsidiary of the recruitment agency escalated her case to remove the OFW from the custody of her employer for eventual repatriation.

While Migrasia believes efforts to repatriate the migrant domestic worker will be successful, the development has been a worrying example of the abuses that can happen within the existing legal framework surrounding migrant's rights. The Kafala system continues to place migrant workers in a vulnerable position relative to potential bad actors. More must be done to strengthen the mechanisms of protection of domestic workers at the national level, as well as for the prevention of such cases in the first place.

ENFORCEMENT & REMEDIATION

Kenya Migration Corridor

In 2018, Migrasia was notified by a community advocate that for the first time ever, FDWs were being brought to Hong Kong from Kenya as domestic helpers under false and illegal pretenses. Through this community advocate, we were connected to a victim named [INSERT NAME] for what quickly became evident was a human trafficking case.

Over the next four years, our team worked on the cases involving additional women brought to Hong Kong by Talent Kenya Company Limited employment agency.

We reached out to our network in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) community , which landed us a meeting with the the Hong Kong Security Bureau. Our evidence collection allowed us to successfully help these women become identified as a victim of human trafficking by the Hong Kong government, a long and tedious process not easily carried through to this extent. We further helped some of the women who wanted to stay in Hong Kong to find safe employment and employed one of the women who returned to Kenya as a virtual assistant for our Hong Kong-Kenya corridor survivor program which works to inform and contact victims and potential victims.

Within the numerous violations of Talent Kenya, we highlight the following which transcend into many other schemes around the globe.

Violations Documented

No. 01 — **Illegal Agency Fees**

Talent Kenya and/or its representatives deducted up to 90% of the salaries of victims as (illegal) agency fees, violating Hong Kong law which restricts agencies to charge no more than 10% of the first month's salaries.

No. 02 — **Deduction of wages**

In addition, a representative of Talent Kenya would directly deduct wages from personal bank accounts of victims, without the consent of victims

No. 03 — **False Trade Description**

"Off days and public holidays" were advertised for the roles. Talent Kenya then imposed an unwarranted three month "probation period" whereby employers were instructed to not give workers any days off or holidays, violating Immigration Department regulations.

No. 04 — **Restriction of Freedom**

During this three month probation period, victims had their mobile phones and passports confiscated.

No. 05 — **Abuse**

Victims revealed that they suffered abuse from their employers physically, verbally and psychologically.

Case Outcome

In 2021, after 3 years of working on the case, Migrasia was able to successfully secure a conviction of the employment agency owner. The owner was convicted for overcharging commission, and ordered to pay a fine and compensation to the victims.
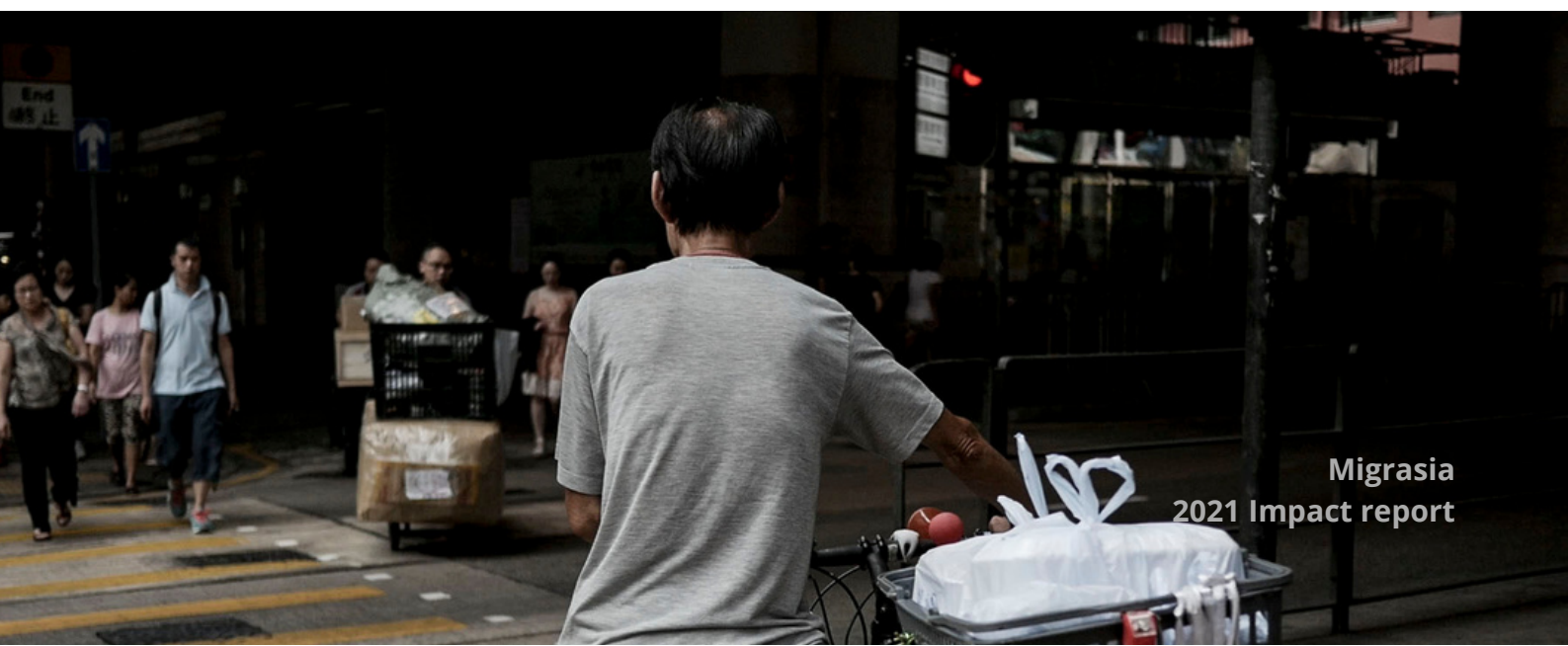
ENFORCEMENT & REMEDIATION

Family Han Lenders

Migrasia had another signficant success in 2021 in upholding the conviction against Family Han. This organisation is one of the largest lenders in the Philippines and a key facilitator of the bonded labour of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong. Family Han was found guilty of two main classes of abuses, and charged with committing three instances of unfair debt collection practices and eight instances of obfuscating information about the true cost of loans given out to borrowers, which made adequate repayment difficult. Family Han had its credit license revoked by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of the Philippines.

The SEC announced that the number of violations identified and evidenced by the prosecution team point to 'a conscious and deliberate disregard of the provisions' of the Commission. Family Han's appeal was decisively struck down, with the Commission emphasising that the license is given as a 'privilege' which requires organisations to abide by the law.

We worked tirelessly for two years alongside partner organisations such as HELP in order to prove the systemic nature of the violations carried out by Family Han and secure the conviction. We estimate that around HKD$30 million in loans were terminated as a result of our efforts. Moreover, we hope the precedent set by this decision and the termination of the organisation's license will continue to have a positive impact in the fight against bonded labour, on top of providing justice to the victims in the present.

ENFORCEMENT & REMEDIATION

Civil Society Taskforce IMO

Migrasia lead a presentation on behalf of 7-8 other organisations at the HK Security Bureau in October 2021, outlining constructive feedback for the Hong Kong Security Bureau's C-TIP programme (Combatting Traffic in Persons).

Migrasia contextualised its recommendations by using case studies from clinical work, advocating for a more transparent system and more guidance from the department. Migrasia also leveraged its data and analysis capabilities to make the case for its suggested improvements to the HK Security Bureau. This strengthened the case made to the authorities, providing undeniable evidence of the need for change in the reporting and screening processes of TIP cases.
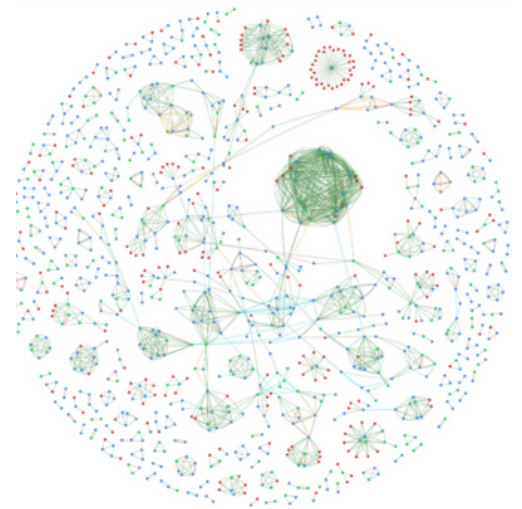
RESEARCH & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Case Studies Published

In 2021, we identified a significant gap in the literature used to teach Business School students around the world. Debt bondage is the most common form of enslavement with an estimated 21 million people bonded to labour illegally according to a 2016 UN report into contemporary forms of slavery. Nevertheless, there were no business school case studies describing bonded labour before Migrasia contributed four such documents, in collaboration with the Asia Case Research Centre at The University of Hong Kong.

Business school case studies are a primary way through which Business and MBA students are taught how to think about management and business framework. As such, the fact that students who are at the frontline of business management and operations are not taught about bonded labor and other labor abuses is a massive oversight in their knowledge base. Migrasia collaborated on four case studies, covering forced labor in the Malaysian rubber glove industry, fair employment agency models, the global textile manufacturing sector, and child slavery in the cocoa industry.
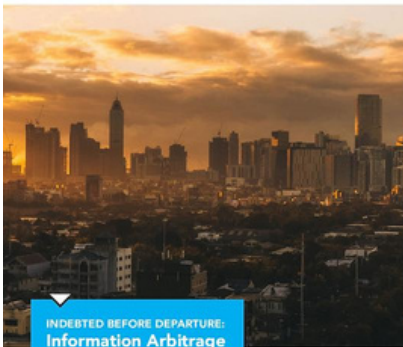
Impact of Case Studies

- 4 Case Studies published
- 1,578 readers from universities and independent users
- Taught in 15 education programmes
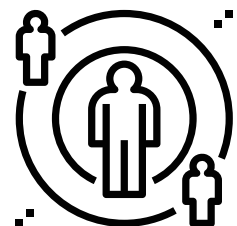
RESEARCH & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Indebted Before Departure

Migrasia, in coordination with the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and made possible by Winrock International, published a research project to address critical information gaps in the existing migration literature regarding the pre-departure phase of migration for aspiring Filipino migrant domestic workers.

The research employed a simple random sampling approach, disseminating the survey via online research panels and filtering for the target population through two screening questions. In this way, a large number of aspiring migrants were identified at a low cost.

In 2021, we revisited this research in order to present it to the Philippines government, employment agencies and a bank. The Philippines government in particular was very excited by both the findings and the survey methodology that Migrasia pioneered for the purposes of this research.

Following is the list of some of the Engagements via Public Sharing & Implementation of the Underpinning Research with relevant organizations:

- **Presentation to Philippines TIP Stakeholders**, 23 June 2021. Participant NGOs: Atikha, Children's Legal Bureau, Blas F. Ople Centre, Ministry with Migrants and Trafficking in Persons, ACTION, and others.
- **Evidence 2 Action Summit**, June 2021. Participants: Philippines stakeholders including government officers from PESO, POEA, and OWWA
- **Presentation to PASEI, POEA & OWWA**, 13 October 2021. Presentation of our research to a larger group of Philippines government officials, including 28 Total Participants from: the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration & Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, and Philippine Association of Service Exporters, Inc. (PASEI).
- **Presentation to Banco De Oro, Philippines**, 4 November 2021. Participants included the Head of Fraud Risk Management and Team lead Fraud Support and Investigations at Banco De Oro.
- **USAID Asia CTIP: Indebted Before Departure, Participant Exchange**, 9 March 2022. Participants: Over 100 attendees including civil society organizations, government agencies, research institutes and anti-trafficking stakeholders from across Asia

RESEARCH & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Online Engagement Research

In 2021, Migrasia received a grant to conduct a highly-impactful study that aims to categorise engagement across its Facebook pages and groups on the basis of a few key variables such as a post's organic reach, organic engagement, likes and shares.

Facebook allows the account owner of a page to track certain data points that pertain to that page. However, this data isn't aggregated or analysed, and in isolation it cannot be used to gain insight into how people interact with the page. Our study uses social network analysis and a mathematical algorithm consisting of ordinary differential equations to categorise posts on the basis of virality, in order to more accurately track the posts that are successful in engaging current and prospective migrant workers on social media.

Once completed, the research will inform Migrasia's online victim engagement and identification strategy. We will then seek to engage other key stakeholders in order to demonstrate the effectiveness and potential of social media, to encourage other NGOs and even government agencies to actively seek out and identify migrant domestic workers before any instance of abuse occurs.

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Global Migration Legal Clinic

The Global Migration Legal Clinic, run by the University of Hong Kong's Faculty of Law and partnered with Migrasia, identifies and supports migrant domestic workers who are victims of bonded labor and other illegal labor practices. Students in this Clinic study and assist with specific legal casework and problems, and devise holistic solutions to migration problems. We have trained more than 70 students via the GMLC project since inception.

Student Empowerment

Apart from providing support to clients of the legal clinic, community and education engagements such as the Global Migration Legal Clinic volunteering opportunities and the University of Hong Kong's Impact Lab course allow students to gain important work experience. All students interviewed emphasised how the work they did for Migrasia helped them gain confidence and develop essential client skills which are invaluable in the job market. Interns found that their work either complemented their degree, providing new insights into their subject, or offered them the opportunity to build life skills that their degree does not afford.

Migrasia offers a supportive environment for students to learn and challenge themselves. The learning curve is steep, and students are afforded an unusual degree of freedom to develop themselves and contribute according to their own strengths. In the clinic, the creativity of the organisation also inspired students to think critically and explore alternative remedial pathways and solutions. The Impact Lab course, meanwhile, helped students strengthen their soft skills, leadership skills, and ability to apply their knowledge and competence in a business environment.

Adam Winqvist, Migrasia intern in September 2021, HKU Law Exchange Student

"GMLC is probably the course that has changed my perspective on legal work the most. It really showed me that there are so many other ways than "the traditional legal method" to achieve a desired result. I also found it very exciting and rewarding to work directly with clients and on a case where the result of my work could actually have a tangible impact on the issue."

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Other HKU Legal Clinic Partnerships

"What I enjoyed the most was being a part of the network Migrasia built around the community, through social media and the support of virtual assistants. The 'behind the scenes' work happening at Migrasia is essential to the legal help we provide to clients, and the capacity to harness social media innovation like this is really rare in legal services."

Annabelle Basterrechea-Jones, Migrasia intern and HKU JD Student

Jessie Chih-Shi Hsia, Migrasia intern and HKU JD Student

"Law school is very theoretical, so it was great to work for Migrasia and get perspective on what the value of my studies was. Learning about abstract legal frameworks can be quite alienating because there's no people involved, but the work I did for Migrasia was the opposite. Getting experience working with clients is also something I'm very grateful for, as well as being introduced to data-driven legal work."

TEAM

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NGO PARTNERS

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- Mekong Club
- Trace Kenya

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- Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher's
- Mayer Brown
- Patricia Ho & Associates
- Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom

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- HKU Business School
- HKU Journalism
- Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, HKU

Migrasia

Migrasia Global Solutions Limited is a Hong Kong registered charity exempted from tax under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Registered Charity 91/16858.

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