

# Pro Bono Spotlight: Tilleke & Gibbins Helps Young Inventors Protect Affordable, Sustainable Housing Design

The MARU Project tackles a vital problem in an innovative manner. The problem is severe flooding in the Mekong Delta, which poses a distinct risk to low-income residents whose homes are frequently damaged or lost due to rising waters. The solution is a low-cost, eco-friendly, floating house, built on a Y-shaped “cell” design that can connect to other cells to form a community. MARU envisions building these homes for low-income families in Vietnam, and also marketing them to eco-tourism companies.

Before launching operations, however, the MARU team needed to protect its designs and trademarks to prevent others from copying its unique idea. As the project is run by graduate students with limited funding, we were happy to assist with the registration of patents and trademarks in Vietnam on a pro bono basis. We were very impressed by MARU’s invention and their social enterprise business model, and we wish them great success in the future.

