Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Colin Lowther. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. In a village in Cambodia a mother prepares food for her family. She boils some water in a big round cooking pot. She washes a small fish. Then she puts it in the boiling water. After ten minutes she removes the fish from the pot. Her family will not eat this fish. She puts other food into the pot to cook for her family. But what about the fish the mother took out of the pot? The family will not eat it. This fish is not food. It is made from iron metal. It is about 7.5 centimetres long and weighs 200 grams. The fish is smiling. The mother and her family like the fish. They call it their Lucky Iron Fish. Thousands of families in Cambodia have a Lucky Iron Fish. And like this mother, they all put their fish into their cooking water. Today’s Spotlight is on the Lucky Iron Fish. Christopher Charles studied Health Science at a university in Canada. When he finished his degree, he went to Cambodia. Charles lived in a small village in the country. His job was to treat particular infections. He also studied the health condition anaemia. Anaemia is a serious condition. People with anaemia do not have enough iron in their bodies. They are iron deficient. People who have anemia are often very tired and lack energy. Anaemia makes people more likely to be sick or get an infection. Anaemia can damage the physical and mental development of children. If pregnant women are not treated, their babies can be born too early and die. If a new mother has anemia, she has an increased risk of dying when her baby is born. Charles did not know how common anaemia was in Cambodia. But every place he went, he saw evidence of it. In a TED talk, he said: ‘Everywhere I went people were lying down. They were lying out of the heat of the sun. No-one had any energy. No energy to work. No energy to play. No energy to learn.’ As part of his study, Charles did blood tests on many people. He discovered something shocking. About ninety [90] per cent of women and children had anaemia. Charles had discovered a very big problem. He knew he could not leave Cambodia. He decided to stay and find a solution. Charles knew that iron medicine is the usual treatment for anaemia. But iron medicine costs too much money. Charles wanted a solution that cost less money. It also had to be easy for people to use. Research shows that cooking with iron pots could help. The iron pot would release iron into every meal. But Charles knew this idea would not work in Cambodia. Iron pots are heavy and cost too much money. Also, in Cambodia people often leave food in their cooking pots at night. Food goes bad if it is left in an iron pot. So Charles decided to try something different. He added a metal bar made of iron to a cooking pot. The iron bar worked. But people did not cook with it. ‘It did not cost much. It did release lots of iron. But there were huge problems with it. Everywhere I went different families had found some use for it. Just not in the cooking pots. People were using it as a door stop. People used it to hold down papers. Someone even used it to support a table with a broken leg.’ Finally Charles created the iron fish. Fish are part of the culture of Cambodia. People in Cambodia eat fish every day. And they believe that fish are lucky. So people are happy to put the iron fish in their cooking pots. San Soeun is a village chief in Cambodia. She told the BBC how her family reacted to the iron fish. ‘At first my family thought it was very funny and very strange that I was putting the iron fish in the boiling water or soup. So I explained to them that it can improve our health and make us stronger.’ Charles had to be sure that the iron fish solved the problem of anaemia. So he carried out lots of tests. And he found that the iron fish worked well. Charles tested people’s iron levels. Then they used the iron fish for cooking every day. After nine months Charles tested their iron levels again. He found that half the people had no anaemia. People told Charles that they felt different too. They told him that they had more energy. Many people were pleased to take part in the tests. One mother told the BBC, ‘I am happy. The blood tests show that I have the iron deficiency problem. So I hope I will be cured and will be healthy soon. I think all the people in Sekeroung village will like the fish, because fish is our every day food.’ The iron fish has helped thousands of people in Cambodia. It has improved their health. But it has also helped the local economy. People who use the fish in their food miss less days at work. The iron fish has another economic benefit. Nearly 50 people have jobs from the iron fish. They make and supply the fish. The iron fish is good for the environment too. It is made from recycled iron - iron that was once used for another purpose. More and more people are using the lucky iron fish. In the next five years Charles hopes that one million people in Cambodia will use the iron fish. But anaemia is not just a problem in Cambodia. Anaemia is a worldwide problem. It affects one in three people in the world. The World Health Organisation says that iron deficiency affects more people than any other health condition. But in some places people do not eat fish. Charles says this is not a problem. The iron could be in a different form. What is important is that it is right for each culture. Then people will use it. And it will improve their lives. The writer of this programme was Katy Blake. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted for this programme and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this programme again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. The programme is called, ‘The Lucky Iron Fish’. Tell us what you think about today’s programme. You can leave a comment on our website. And find us on Facebook - just search for Spotlight Radio. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight programme. Goodbye.