Welcome to Spotlight. I'm Robin Basselin. And I'm Ryan Geertsma. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Fifteen year old Lale Labuko stands in his village. His heart is beating very fast. He is completely shocked and frightened. Labuko has just seen a man take a two year old girl from her mother. The mother is crying and reaching out for her baby. And no one is stopping the man. Labuko wonders, "What is happening?" Later on, Labuko’s mother explained the situation to him. She told him that the man had taken the girl to sacrifice her. Labuko’s tribe believed that if they killed the young girl, they would protect the village. This kind of sacrifice was common in the Omo River Valley in Ethiopia. But when Labuko saw this, he felt strong emotions deep in his heart. He promised himself that some day, he would end child sacrifice in the land of his ancestors. Today's Spotlight is on Lale Labuko and his effort to end child sacrifice in Ethiopia. The Omo River Valley is one of the most beautiful places in Ethiopia. Many different tribes live in this area. These tribes survive by hunting, farming, and taking care of animals. Each tribe has a very strong system of values. These beliefs have been the base of each tribe’s culture for thousands of years. The Kara, the Bena, and the Hamer are three Omo River valley tribes. All of these tribes share a similar belief in child sacrifice. They believe that some children are born mingi. Mingi means cursed, or evil. The tribes believe that mingi children will cause bad things to happen - like the spread of disease or a lack of food and water for the community. People believe there are four main signs that a child is mingi. One sign is when a baby gets his first teeth on the top side of his mouth instead of the bottom. When this happens, the baby is mingi. Babies born to a mother who is not married are also considered mingi. If the tribe elders, or leaders, do not agree that particular parents should have children, their babies are mingi. And the last sign of mingi is twins. When two babies are born at the same time, from the same mother, they are considered mingi. Tribal leaders sacrifice mingi children because they believe it will protect the village. They sacrifice newly born babies by taking them away from the village - to country or bush areas. They fill the babies’ mouths with dirt. Then they leave them to starve or be eaten by animals. Tribal leaders push older babies and children off the edge of tall mountains or throw them into the river to drown. Tribe members believe that the mingi curse will leave the village when the child dies. Lale Labuko grew up in a tribe that believed in this kind of mingi child sacrifice. He is a member of the Kara tribe. In fact before Labuko was born, he had two sisters. But they were mingi, and the tribe sacrificed them. When Labuko was 9 years old, his father sent him away to school. It was a Christian school managed by people from the country of Sweden. At this school Labuko learned to read, write and speak other African languages. He also studied about Christianity and other cultures. As Labuko learned about these things, he began to think differently about child sacrifice. He did not believe that particular children were born mingi. Labuko still respected his tribe and his culture, but he recognized that child sacrifice was wrong. And other people felt the same way as he did. Aryo Dora is a young Kara man. He works with Labuko. He also believes that sacrificing mingi children is wrong. He told the news organization CNN, "There are many important and good parts of our culture. There is also a sickness in our culture. And we have to change ourselves." And this is what Labuko decided he would do - change his tribal culture from within it. For many years, the government of Ethiopia had tried to end child sacrifice. They made it illegal. But the Omo River Valley tribes live very far away from modern cities. And they perform the sacrifices in secret. So even with the laws against it, hundreds of children would still die every year. Labuko understood that laws would not change culture. He knew that his tribe’s culture would not change without the support of the tribal elders. So the first thing he did was find other young Kara people who also believed that sacrificing mingi children was wrong. Together, these young people met with the tribal elders. Labuko spoke with the Telegraph news organization. He explained what he told the elders: "I said, 'There is no need to kill these mingi children. Let us remove them from the tribe. And the curse will leave with them.'" At first, the elders did not want to give the mingi children to Labuko. They were afraid that an evil curse would come on the village. But Labuko spoke with great emotion to the elders. He told them that he would take the curse on himself. With time, the elders agreed. And for 4 years, tribal leaders gave all mingi children to Labuko. During this time, Labuko rescued almost 40 children. But he did not do it alone. He worked with friends and a Christian organization. Together, they started an orphanage to provide food, security, and an education for the children. Labuko told Condé Nast Traveler magazine, "I wanted them to become living examples that the mingi are blessed, not cursed." After four years, Kara tribal elders saw that no harm had come to their community by letting the mingi children live. So in July of 2012, the tribe held an official ceremony to end mingi child sacrifice. That day was a great victory for Labuko. However, Labuko knows there is still work to do. Like the Kara, the Bena have also stopped most of their mingi sacrifices. But the largest Omo River Valley tribe, the Hamer, continues to sacrifice mingi children. Labuko plans to work with the king of the Hamer until they also agree to stop child sacrifice. Labuko told National Geographic magazine: "My father always told me that to earn respect, you must help the weak and fight the strong. These children I saved are examples to everyone. They will change the world one day." The writer of this program was Jennifer Hawkins. The producer was Micho Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, "Saving Mingi Children." We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.