

Holocaust Memorial Day 2019 Postcard Project

Secondary lesson plan



HOLOCAUST
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The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2019 is **Torn from home**. This activity explores the life stories of two people who were forced to leave their homes behind; Renee Bornstein during the Holocaust and Sokphal Din during the Genocide in Cambodia. Students will have the opportunity to write postcards to these survivors in response to learning about their experiences.

On HMD 2019 we also mark the 40th anniversary of the end of the Genocide in Cambodia.

Suitable for use in: History, English, RE, Citizenship, SMSC/British values education



Learning objectives:

- All students will be able to give examples of experiences of people who have survived genocide
- Most students will evaluate the life stories and draw conclusions about what we can learn from them
- Some students will comment on the broader issue of refugees, and what we can learn from these stories to apply to our own society today

You will need:

- Postcards – one per person. You can download these to print yourself or order free printed postcards (subject to availability) at hmd.org.uk/postcards
- *Life story map* worksheets (one per small group)
- Life stories of Renee Bornstein and Sokphal Din. Two versions (easy to read and full formats) are included at the end of this lesson plan for you to choose from, according to the level of your learners and the time you have available
- The form for returning your postcards to HMDT

Notes for teachers:

Please be aware that this lesson plan asks students to consider traumatic events and 'what makes a home'. Some students may find the subject matter difficult, especially if they themselves have experienced trauma or have a challenging home environment.

Background knowledge:

- No background knowledge of the Holocaust or genocide is required
- Differentiation is built into the lesson for teachers to adapt activities for different abilities
- This activity is designed for a secondary school age group
- This activity explores life stories from the Holocaust and the Genocide in Cambodia, so could be an introduction to the subject, or an engaging extension to prior learning of these periods of history
- Background information sheets are provided for teachers on both the Holocaust and the Genocide in Cambodia to help you answer students' questions

Introductory discussion (5 minutes)

What is Holocaust Memorial Day? How can we mark it in school?

Each year on 27 January we mark Holocaust Memorial Day, to remember:

- the six million Jewish people who were systematically persecuted and murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust
- the Nazis' other victims, including Roma and Sinti people, disabled people, gay people, political opponents and many others who faced persecution and death at the hands of the Nazis
- the millions of men, women and children, who have been murdered in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur

This year's theme for Holocaust Memorial Day is **Torn from home**, which we are going to explore in this lesson.

Starter activity (up to 5 minutes)

Discussion: What makes a home?

Have a quick discussion as a class about the word home. What should a home be like?

Answers may include: a place of safety, comfort, security, family, relaxation.

Not all homes are like this. What does it mean to lose a home like that? How would it make you feel?

Answers may include: lost, insecure, alone, stressed, upset, you would miss what you had lost.

Activity one – Life stories (20 minutes)

1. Divide the class into an even number of small groups.
2. Allocate each group the life story of a genocide survivor. Half of the groups should read about Renee Bornstein and the other half about Sokphal Din.
3. Hand out the *Life story map* worksheets to each group. Ask students to complete the questions on the *Life story map*, except the feet section, to draw out what happened to the people they have read about. **Please note** – Students' answers may refer to different points in the story, for example, what they are thinking about at the beginning, middle and end of the life story may be different.
4. Once the *Life story maps* are complete, ask one group from each half of the class to summarise the story for everyone else.
5. *Life story maps* could be stuck around the classroom for students to walk around and read, or each group can share their thoughts from one box.

Differentiation:

With lower ability groups you can focus on one easy to read life story in pairs and work through the story in sections. The students can then identify which section will give them information for each part of the *Life story map*, before focusing on two of the four questions in the 'feet' section.

Higher ability students can be given the full life story. They may benefit from doing this activity individually. As an extension activity they can write up their thoughts from the *Life story map* into an essay.

Activity two – Discussion (10 minutes)

As a whole group, discuss the questions in the 'feet' section on the *Life story map* to encourage students to evaluate what they have learnt.

Question three on the worksheet asks: 'What can we learn from these stories to apply to our own lives and actions?' Answers might include:

- Being welcoming to people from other countries and cultures
- Supporting those in our communities who have fled violence and persecution
- Standing together against prejudice and discrimination
- Sharing what we have learnt with others and marking HMD each year
- Learning more about refugees and their experiences today

Activity three – Postcard Project (15 minutes)

Give each student a postcard and ask them to choose one of the survivors they have learnt about to write to. This can be either of the stories, not just the one they explored in their group. Give the below guidance before starting the activity.

Postcard writing guidance

Give students the following structure to follow:

Dear (survivor name),

I have read your story and...

Lower ability

- This is how it made me feel

Medium ability

- This is how it made me feel
- This is what I have learnt that I didn't know before



Activity continued →

Higher ability

- This is how it made me feel
- This is what I have learnt that I didn't know before
- This is what I have been inspired to do/change in my own life after hearing your story

**Yours sincerely,
(Student name)**

Explain to the class that the survivors they have learnt about are still alive today and that they will receive the postcards. Ask students not to repeat the story back to the survivor - they know what happened to them and reminding them might be traumatic.

Encourage students to take the activity seriously - sometimes difficult stories like these make us want to make jokes to help us to feel better, but inappropriate postcards will not be sent on. This exercise is about making positive contact, to let someone know their story is being learnt and that they are remembered.

Plenary discussion (5 minutes)

Today we have learnt about people who were forced to leave their homes. We have thought about what that means and how these people may have felt.

Question: How do these stories make you feel?

Answers may include:

- Sad – feeling empathy towards people for their difficult experiences
- Angry – that there are people being treated badly and killed because of who they are
- Shocked – that these things still happen today (for example in the ongoing Genocide in Darfur)
- Inspired – to take action and do positive things to help people being discriminated against today

Take the learning further:

You can read more life stories of survivors, rescuers and people who were murdered in genocides on our website: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

Important note for teachers - after the lesson:

Please fill in the form below and send it to HMDT, as detailed on the form. You can include some or all of the completed postcards your class has written, to be passed onto the survivors. You are welcome to keep the postcards for a display, please just return the form in this instance.

As long as the form is fully filled in, our team will review the messages and send all appropriate messages on to the survivors. You will receive a postcard back from Renee Bornstein and Sokphal Din with a message for the class.

Share what you and your students have done to mark HMD on our interactive map and be part of the national picture of how schools and communities are commemorating the day. You can mark your event as private if it is not open to outside visitors.

Visit hmd.org.uk/letusknow to complete the short form.

We would love to see photographs of your displays and hear about any other HMD activities in the school. This helps us to know how our school resources are used, and your school may be featured as a case study when we talk about the range of activities taking place across the UK for HMD.

Feel free to contact us on education@hmd.org.uk if you have any questions.

Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: hmd.org.uk

Order an activity pack or resources: hmd.org.uk/activitypack

Resources for educators: hmd.org.uk/education

Life story map

Head:

What were they thinking about?

Eyes and ears:

What did they see and hear?

Arms:

What actions did they take?

Heart:

How do you think they felt?

Legs:

How did they escape or survive?

Home:

What did they have to leave behind?
What would they have missed?

Feet: Follow up questions

1. What alternative homes did this person live in after being forced from their own home?
2. What have you learnt about the genocide from reading this person's story?
3. What can we learn from these stories to apply to our own lives and actions?
4. What would you like to say to this person?

Holocaust Memorial Day 2019 Postcard Project

Schools return form



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Once you and your group have completed the postcard activity, please fill in the form below in order to receive response postcards.

You are welcome to include some or all of the postcards written by your group to be passed on to the survivors. However, if you would prefer to keep them for a display or similar, please still complete the form and let us know. Without this information we cannot send you a return message.

Please send your form to:

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
PO Box 61074
London
SE1P 5BX

Your name			
Email address			
Telephone number		Your school, organisation or group	
Address to send return postcard to		Date of postcard activity	
		Age group of students	

Please let us know if you have done any other activities for HMD 2019:

Activity	✓	How many?	Other information (for example dates, age groups)
Assembly			
Lesson plan			
Tutor Time activities		<i>(There are 5 available)</i>	<i>How many tutor groups in the school did them?</i>
Other activities			

Form continues overleaf

Thank you for marking Holocaust Memorial Day 2019. Please see data permissions below:

Permission to store data and contact you:

- Please tick if you are happy for the information submitted above to be stored by HMDT on our database.
- Please tick if you are happy for HMDT to contact you with information about support available for schools for organising HMD activities in the future.

HMDT's full privacy policy can be viewed at www.hmd.org.uk/privacy.

Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: hmd.org.uk
Resources for educators: hmd.org.uk/education

Renee Bornstein

Easy to read life story



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Key terms:

Jewish: People who follow the religion of Judaism.

World War Two: A large war fought in Europe from 1939 – 1945.

Nazi Party: The group who were in power in Germany from 1933 – 1945, led by Adolf Hitler.

Refugee: A person who has to leave their home because they are in danger.

The Holocaust: The attempt by the Nazis to kill all the Jews in Europe.

My name is Renee. I was born in France in 1934. As a child I lived with my parents, my older sister, Helen, and my younger brother, Joe. My family and I are **Jewish**.

During **World War Two**, the German Army took control of France. Germany was led by the **Nazi Party**, who believed that German people were better than lots of other groups, especially Jewish people like my family.

Life became very hard and scary. Jewish people were being taken away and we didn't know where. Whenever the Nazis came to our village, we had to run and hide in barns, farms or cellars.

My parents knew that we were in danger and we couldn't hide forever. They made the hard decision to send us away in June 1944. I was 10 years old, Helen was 13 and Joe was 9.

First we were hidden by Catholic nuns for two weeks. I was very frightened and I missed my parents so much. I refused to eat and could hardly sleep.

We left the nuns and got on a train to the French town of Lyon. There we joined a group of 36 children. We all travelled towards Switzerland. It was a scary journey. Nazi soldiers walked up and down the trains trying to find Jewish people.

When we got off the train we were met by a woman called Marianne Cohn. She was 22 years old. She was going to help us escape to Switzerland. There weren't Nazis there and we would be safe.

A group of German soldiers appeared with barking dogs. Marianne told them we were going to a holiday camp. They kept asking us 'Are you Jewish?' We said no, but they took us to a prison.

We were taken to a big, empty room. A soldier pointed his gun at us and asked 'Are you Jewish?' Again and again I said no. Eventually, he let us go back to our cells.

Every day, Marianne was taken away and beaten. Some people tried to save her, but she didn't escape because she had promised the parents that she would not leave us children alone. The Nazis killed Marianne. I will never forget her, she was a true heroine.

Today, a school in that town is named after her. Because of her bravery, she saved 200 children.

After two weeks the Lord Mayor of the town, Jean Deffaugt, managed to get us out of prison. The Nazis let him send us to a children's home. They came every week to count us. If any children had escaped, they said they would kill all of us and the Lord Mayor. We lived there for three months.

When the Nazis left the town, we were taken to a **refugee** centre in Switzerland, where we lived for another three months. When we saw our parents again we had been apart for over six months.

The Nazis tried to kill all the Jewish people in Europe. This is known as **the Holocaust**. People like me and my family were very lucky to get away. By the end of the war, the Nazis had killed six million Jews.

I grew up to have a happy life. I married Ernst, another Jew who the Nazis had attacked, and we had three children. My family is proud to be Jewish.

When my husband died, we moved to Manchester in the UK. Manchester is my home now.

Find out more... The Holocaust: hmd.org.uk/holocaust
Other resources for educators: hmd.org.uk/education

Renee Bornstein



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Renee Bornstein survived the Holocaust by hiding in barns, farms and convents. Marianne Cohn, a resistance worker, was murdered by the Gestapo for trying to help Renee and other children escape.



'When you are in hiding and when you are arrested, you live in fear and confront death every day. How could I be a child again?'

My name is Renee Bornstein, née Koenig. I was born in Strasbourg, France in 1934. When I was five years old, I moved with my parents, my older sister, Helen, and my younger brother, Joe, to the small town of St Junien, in the south west of France.

When the Nazis occupied France, life for Jewish people like us became more difficult. Our daily life was restricted and people started to vanish. Whenever my parents heard the Nazis were about to search the village, my parents would rush us from our beds to hide in barns, farms, convents and even the cellar of a local chapel. Can you imagine how it felt, as a child of just eight, huddled in a dark attic or a barn, unable to make a sound? Even a creak in the rooms above or below meant the possibility of discovery, or even betrayal.

As the Nazi regime tightened its grip over occupied France, it became clear to my parents they could no longer rely on this plan for survival. They made the agonising decision to send us to Switzerland without them. We were given false papers and joined with other so-called non-Jewish children; the story was we were going to a holiday camp to escape the bombing.

We were hidden in a Catholic convent in France for two weeks. I was very frightened and I missed my parents desperately. I refused to eat and could barely sleep. I kept close to my brother and sister. One day I remember peering through a crack in the window to see SS officers milling around on the street below. For years afterwards whenever I saw a man in uniform, it would send shivers down my spine.

From there we were taken by train to Lyon and hidden in another convent, before heading to a secret crossing point at the Swiss border. It was a tense journey. Nazi officers prowled the crowded carriages. The Gestapo were everywhere.

Near the Swiss border, our group was joined by a Jewish Girl Guide and French Resistance worker, Marianne Cohn. She organised a lorry to take us to our destination. In the lorry, my sister Helen swallowed the Swiss money my parents had given us in case the Nazis found it.

As we approached the border a lorry of Germans appeared with barking dogs. A boy from our group tried to escape, but was thrown back into our lorry. He cried out: 'I'm not Jewish! I'm not Jewish!'

Marianne and the lorry driver repeated our story of the holiday camp. They left us alone, but when we arrived at Pas De L'Echelle, a French village near Geneva, they returned. The German officers asked endlessly 'Are you Jewish? Are you Jewish?' We said no but it made little difference; we were sent to Prison Du Pax in Annemasse, France. As we arrived my sister said: 'You no longer need to save your dress for Shabbos, because we are all going to die.'

After a few days, we were taken by the Gestapo chief commandant Meyer and his associate to a big, empty room for questioning. There was a boy lying down, curled-up on a plank. He had been beaten. I still remember his face and his name: Leon Sonnstein.

Meyer pointed his gun at our faces. He said: 'If you don't tell the truth, you will be beaten like him. Are you Jewish?'

Again and again I said no. I told him my name was Renee Blanchee. I gave a false address and I made up names for my mother and father. Eventually, he let us go and we returned to our cells.

Every morning Marianne was taken for questioning, every evening she returned with a red and swollen face. She was subjected to hot and cold baths and other torture. Her face became deformed. She had the opportunity to reveal our true identities and save her own life, but she never took it. Eventually, she was murdered by the Gestapo. A school in Annemasse, France was named after her; a tribute to her bravery in saving two hundred children.

In August 1944, about two weeks after our arrival, the Lord Mayor of Annemasse negotiated our freedom. Members of the underground movement 'Le Maki' took us to a Red Cross refugee centre at the Carlton Hotel in Geneva and after three months we were returned home to our parents. We had been apart for six months. My parents survived by going into hiding.

I lost my childhood. I never learnt how to be truly carefree.

I married a concentration camp survivor, Ernst Bornstein. We lived in Munich and had three children. When he died in 1978 we moved to Manchester. With the warmth of the Manchester Jewish community, we were able to heal and I was proud to bring my children up with Jewish identities. Manchester is my home now.

Through my children and grandchildren, I found joy in life again. I am a child of the Shoah. My family is my victory.

Find out more...

The Holocaust [hmd.org.uk/holocaust](https://www.hmd.org.uk/holocaust)

Discover the story of Ernst Bornstein, Renee's husband, and his book *The Long Night*: [holocaustmatters.org](https://www.holocaustmatters.org)

[hmd.org.uk](https://www.hmd.org.uk)
enquiries@hmd.org.uk
020 7785 7029

 [@hmd_uk](https://twitter.com/hmd_uk)
 [hmd.uk](https://www.facebook.com/hmd.uk)

Learning from genocide - for a better future

Sokphal Din

Easy to read life story



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Key terms:

Cambodia: A country in Southeast Asia.

Rebel: A person who refuses to accept the government's power and tries to change things.

Government: A group of people who run a country making the laws and rules.

Labour camp: A prison where people are forced to work as slaves.

Refugee: A person who has to leave their home because they are in danger.

Sokphal (*pronounced sock-pal*) was born in **Cambodia** in 1958. He lived with his parents and three younger siblings in the capital city Phnom Penh. His dad worked for the Cambodian army. Sokphal wanted to be a doctor.

In April 1975, when Sokphal was 17 years old, his dad had gone to work and the rest of the family were eating breakfast. There was a knock on the door. Sokphal opened the door to two soldiers. They were not from the Cambodian army. They pointed a gun at Sokphal and said the family had to leave their home right away.

Everyone in the city was being forced out and crowds of people were already walking to the countryside. The soldiers were from a **rebel** army who had attacked the **government** and taken over control of the country. They were called the Khmer Rouge.

Sokphal's dad was already at work, wearing his Cambodian army uniform. The Khmer Rouge soldiers were killing anyone they found from the old army, so Sokphal's family had to find him and give him different clothes before the soldiers did. Luckily a friend found him and he got changed and left with the family.

Sokphal's family was taken to a **labour camp**. Sokphal had to work on farms every day under the hot sun. He was only allowed to eat three spoonfuls of rice a day.

The Khmer Rouge wanted everyone to work on farms and not live in cities. They didn't like people who were educated. Sokphal lied and said that he could not read or write. This lie saved his life.

Sokphal's dad was taken away and told he could come back in three months. The night before he left, he told Sokphal to look after the family. Sokphal and his mother were very close. Sokphal says she was his best friend.

The family finally heard they were leaving the camp to see their father again. They were excited. But it was a lie. The family was taken into the jungle and left without any food or water. Sokphal realised that he would never see his father again.

People became sick in the jungle and there was no medicine to help them. Sokphal's grandmother and his six-year-old brother both got ill and died. The family were very sad and unhappy.

On 25 December 1978, the country next to Cambodia, Vietnam, invaded and started fighting the Khmer Rouge. Sokphal was forced to join the Khmer Rouge, but promised himself he would never kill anyone. He was captured and put in prison.

When his mother found out which prison he was in, she took his siblings and walked all the way there. She stood outside the fence and, when the guards were not looking, threw a small packet of rice over the fence for Sokphal.

Finally Sokphal got out of prison and saw his family again. But they were still not safe. They decided to escape from Cambodia to Thailand. The journey was very dangerous, but they made it to a **refugee** camp.

They lived there for many years, waiting to be allowed to move to a new country. Finally, the family were allowed to come to England. They arrived in August 1987. It had been 12 years since they last had a safe home.

Sokphal has made his home in Basingstoke in the UK and is writing a book about his experiences.

Find out more...

Genocide in Cambodia: hmd.org.uk/cambodia
Other resources for educators: hmd.org.uk/education

Sokphal Din



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Forced out of his home by the Khmer Rouge on 17 April 1975, Sokphal endured hard labour in the Killing Fields and eventually survived the Genocide in Cambodia by escaping to Thai refugee camps where he lived for seven years.



'We knew that we'd never go back. We knew this is a lie. They just want to kill us. And we knew that we'd never see our father again. We kept hoping, but we knew that it's impossible.'

Sokphal was just 17 years old in April 1975. He lived comfortably with his mother, father and three younger siblings in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. His father, Deuon Din, was an accountant for the existing military in Cambodia and his mother, Pan Penh You, was an entrepreneur. Sokphal was a bright and hard-working boy, who wanted to go to medical school.

Sokphal and his mother and siblings were having breakfast at their home, when there was a knock on the front door. Sokphal opened the door to two soldiers wearing all black from the Khmer Rouge – the extremist Cambodian Communists whose army had seized the city. One soldier pointed his gun at Sokphal and threatened to shoot if the family did not leave their home immediately and get out of the city. Crowds of people were already walking out of Phnom Penh.

'We didn't ask why, didn't lock the door... Didn't think to do anything else... Didn't take anything with us.'

Sokphal's father, Deuon, was already at work in his military uniform. They had to get civilian clothes to him before he was found by the Khmer Rouge, who were killing anybody linked to the existing military of Cambodia that they had just overthrown. Fortunately, a man who worked for Deuon found him first.

Sokphal's extended family all met at his uncle's home. They travelled among the crowds without any water, and were eventually taken to a labour camp. Sokphal was forced into hard labour, seven days a week under the hot sun, in farms, fields and rice paddies. His food allowance was just three spoonfuls of rice per day. These vast agricultural areas became known as the Killing Fields, because enslaved civilians were worked to death. Anyone who disobeyed was beaten or killed.

The Khmer Rouge believed in an extremist version of Communist ideology and aimed to eliminate all social classes. They wanted all members of society to be rural agricultural workers rather than educated city dwellers, who they believed had been corrupted by western capitalist ideas. Sokphal lied, and said that he couldn't read or write and had sold bread on street corners in Phnom Penh. This lie saved his life. The Khmer Rouge searched everyone during the day and night for valuables, which were confiscated, or for identification, which could reveal a hidden past. Luckily, Sokphal had lost his ID card which showed he was a student.

The Khmer Rouge demanded that people who had worked for the old Cambodian military, teachers and the educated declare themselves so that they could be sent back to Phnom Penh to be 're-educated' for three months before returning to their families. Deuon and Pan Penh, Sokphal's parents, had to decide what to do next. Eventually, Deuon left to 'study' in Phnom Penh, believing that the Khmer Rouge would treat his family better if he obeyed their orders.

The night before his departure, Deuon told Sokphal to look after his brothers, sister and mother. As the eldest, this was now his duty. Sokphal and his mother were very close. They worked together to look after the family and keep each other going. Sokphal says she was his best friend and he would not have survived without her.

After weeks of waiting with no news from Deuon, the Khmer Rouge told them that they were going to leave the labour camp to be reunited with the rest of their family. Sokphal and Pan Penh were suspicious, but excited. However, their optimism was short lived. The Khmer Rouge led Sokphal and his family deep into the jungle where they were abandoned without food, water or tools to help them survive. The Khmer Rouge had lied and Sokphal realised that he would never see his father again.

In the jungle, Sokphal's grandmother fell ill. That night they slept under the same mosquito net, Sokphal holding his grandmother's head in his arms. As morning arrived, Sokphal realised she had passed away in the night. With great sadness, the family cremated her body in the jungle.

Sokphal was taken away from the rest of his family to work in a labour camp again. As he left in the morning, Sokphal heard his brother Kosal crying. He was only six years old and sick with malaria. Kosal cursed the soldiers for taking Sokphal away and begged him to stay. But Sokphal had to walk away in tears. Two days later, he heard that Kosal had died.

When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia on 25 December 1978, Sokphal was forced by the Khmer Rouge to train as a soldier, but vowed to himself that he would never kill anyone. Sokphal was captured by the Vietnamese Army who thought he was a Khmer Rouge soldier by choice. He was held in a brick oven with other prisoners. Sokphal thought, 'That's it. They're gonna burn us alive in here. I'm gonna die.'

Instead he was moved to a prison in Siem Reap. He was held there for many months, interrogated and tortured. Meanwhile, his mother asked extensively about her son's whereabouts and had made the journey to Siem Reap on foot, with Sokphal's little brother and sister in tow. Finally, a fellow prisoner managed to negotiate his release alongside her own, and Sokphal was reunited with his family.

Sokphal bartered clothes for gold until he could eventually afford to pay for a guide to help his family escape from Cambodia to Thailand. The journey was very dangerous – the Vietnamese could still recapture them, the country was full of landmines and the rainy season meant much of the land was flooded. Eventually the family made it to a refugee camp at the Thai border. They would live here for many years, waiting to be allowed entry to a new country.

'In the camps we were waiting and waiting and hoping that one day we would leave the camp. There is no future there, living with barbed wire around you, and we were hoping to have a good future somewhere else.'

Finally, the family made contact with a cousin in England, who sponsored them through the Red Cross. They arrived in England on 4 August 1987 and the family began to build a new life and learn English. Sokphal and his family lost all of their property and belongings in the genocide and he has only recently retrieved his birth certificate to discover his real age.

Sokphal is now a freelance translator, works part-time in a supermarket and is writing a book about his experiences.

Find out more...

The Genocide in Cambodia: hmd.org.uk/cambodia

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories