



Colorado River at the Grand Canyon, Arizona, US

"Water issues isn't just a problem of the poor; the rich at times contribute to **SERIOUS WATER ISSUES** as well."



After decades, the Colorado River has finally reached the sea (the Gulf of California) again — the result of a five-year agreement between Mexico and the US, known as Minute 319. It ordered the release of a single pulse flow from the Morelos Dam in the US, and into Mexico.

**THE NILE**  
Tanzania ▶ Uganda ▶ Rwanda ▶ Burundi ▶ Congo-Kinshasa ▶ Kenya ▶ Ethiopia ▶ Eritrea ▶ South Sudan ▶ Sudan ▶ Egypt

Vogel spent three months following the Nile, which passes through 11 countries. The river is clean, right up to when it flows into Egypt. "In Ethiopia, just after Lake Tana (a major source of water flowing into the Nile), the water isn't just pristine, but also considered holy by Orthodox Christians in the monasteries nearby," Vogel said.

In Egypt, river pollutants include "heavy machinery, car tyres, and dead cows". Meanwhile, The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being built in Ethiopia and scheduled for completion in 2017 — will reduce the amount of water flowing into Egypt by 10 per cent. Press reports mention "water wars" intensifying between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.

**THE COLORADO**  
United States of America ▶ Mexico

As for the mighty Colorado, the 2,330km river that starts life in the central Rocky Mountains, Vogel is "shocked" that, until recently, it was the only one in the world that no longer reached the sea. The river passes through the Grand Canyon before the Arizona-Nevada border, before it turns south toward the international border.

Just before this, the river is diverted through the All-American Canal, a 130km long aqueduct, to Southern California where 80 per cent of the water irrigates land for agriculture. "Mexico was not getting any water from the river," said Vogel.

**THE BRAHMAPUTRA**  
China ▶ India ▶ Bangladesh

Along the river (which means 'son of Brahma' in Sanskrit), there is a fierce race between India and China to build hydroelectric dams. Last October, operations at China's first hydropowered dam on the river, the Yarlung Tsangpo, started. This year, five other sections of the dam would also be completed, making a chain of hydro projects on the river. "India too is planning to build more than 150 dams by 2020. These will produce 10 per cent of India's overall energy needs," said Vogel.

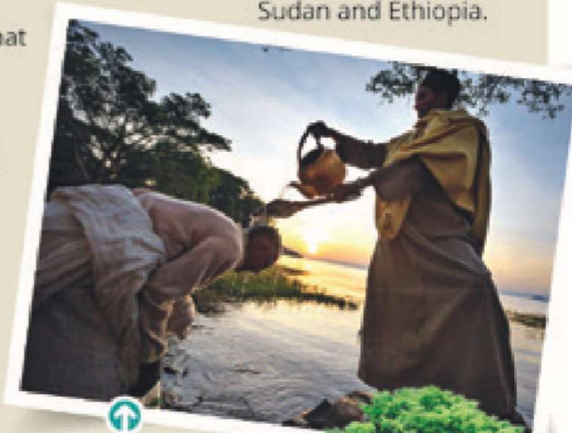
THE CONSTRUCTION OF 150 DAMS BY 2020 WILL PRODUCE **10%** of India's overall energy needs

About 40 per cent of the world's population lives in river and lake basins that comprise two or more countries, and perhaps even more significantly, over 90 per cent lives in countries that share basins. The existing 263 transboundary lake and river basins cover nearly one half of the Earth's land surface and account for an estimated 60 per cent of global freshwater flow.

This opening paragraph of a thematic paper from UN Water titled *Transboundary Waters: Sharing Benefits, Sharing Responsibilities* highlights how critical water supply is to international relations. And where there is shared ownership of water, there is bound to be conflict. It is these conflicts and their possible effects on the supply of freshwater that French photojournalist

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

Franck Vogel travels to the Mekong, the Ganges, the Amazon, and the Zambezi next. His first two-volume book titled *Transboundary Rivers* is scheduled for publication in September 2016; and the second in 2018.



A priest sprinkling "holy water" from Lake Tana over a pilgrim in Ethiopia



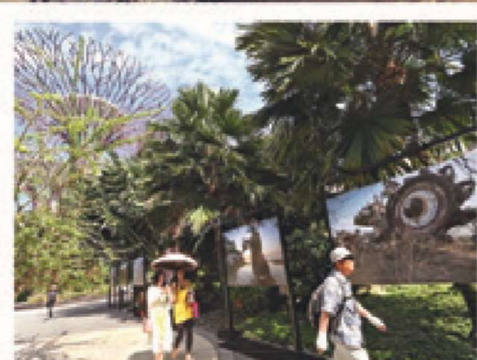
# ONE RIVER AT A TIME

Franck Vogel documents the conflicts that arise from shared rivers.

FRANCK VOGEL, PHOTO-JOURNALIST

Franck Vogel has set out to document. Vogel started with the world's longest river, the 6,650km Nile in 2012, and followed this up with the 2,900km Brahmaputra in 2013. In 2015, he journeyed to the Colorado River, ending the first of his two-part project. Working closely with local activists and occasionally other journalists, Vogel photographs such affected landscapes and the communities who rely on these rivers.

He held a solo exhibition of over 60 photographs in Singapore in April, as part of *Voilà!*, an annual French festival. "It is important for me to emphasise to the world — through



Franck Vogel's photo exhibition at Gardens by the Bay

Fishing at the Brahmaputra