The Sahanivotry Hydro-Electric Power Plant, Madagascar

The abundance of small rivers on the island of Madagascar makes hydropower a natural, environmentally sound choice for generating electricity. The Sahanivotry Hydro-Electric Power Plant project is helping the country meet its significant and growing power needs reliably and in a cost-effective, environment-friendly manner. Sahanivotry is a catalyst for the power sector. Once Sahanivotry is completed, Hydelec, Sahanivotry's operator, will undertake studies for other hydropower projects in Mahitsy (12MW) and Maroantsetra (1.2MW).

The Sahanivotry Plant is Madagascar's first privately owned and operated hydro-electric power plant and the first hydropower plant to be built on the island since 1982. Located on the Sahanivotry River 30 km south of Antsirabe in the province of Antanarivo, the hydropower plant has an installed capacity of 15 MW and an average gross electricity generation of 90 GWh. It will produce 10% of the island's total supply of electricity.

The hydropower plant feeds the Antanarivo and Antsirabe grid, which currently subjects users to chronic power cuts and load shedding. This grid, in turn, feeds the regional grid of Antananarivo, Madagascar's capital. For the people living in the towns supplied by these grids, the prospect of a more reliable supply of electricity is quite positive. Workers at the Ibity cement factory will be spared the work stoppages imposed by frequent power outages. Carpenters and woodworkers in the towns being electrified by the grid can imagine setting up shop. One beneficiary commune now has lights, making it safer for people to walk outside at night.

The African Development Bank provided about half the €13 million to build the plant and the balance came from local commercial banks and the electrical company running the plant, Hydelec.

Hydelec's president observes that the costs of generating electricity through hydropower are far lower than the costs of generating power by operating thermal power plants that produce equivalent amounts of electricity. He sees the future of energy on Madagascar in hydropower, wind power and solar power.