

Interview with Dr. Khulood Rambo – A Visionary in Middle East Project Management Delivery

March 11, 2025



It is a mere 24 hours since the successful international webinar event, where, as part of a distinguished panel, Dr. Khulood Rambo shared her insights on how the industry can enhance collaboration to improve the sustainability of delivering mega-projects—now a defining feature of her region.

“I still feel the excitement, even a full day later,” Dr. Khulood confides. “It was a fantastic opportunity to talk about what I do, to express my passion for project management, and to explain why I am such an advocate for the sustainable delivery of projects. At the same time, it was a moment to recognize the immense opportunity for societal transformation and rejuvenation that visionary projects bring.”

Her words are powerful, and I am eager to understand what has driven Dr. Khulood, a highly respected Program Manager in the public sector in Saudi Arabia, to achieve such an esteemed standing in her profession. Leading **strategic digital transformation and analytics initiatives within the PMO domain**, she has made an impact across multiple sectors.

How did you start your career?

“I began in academia,” Dr. Khulood explains. “I was the Dean of the College of Engineering at a prominent university for women in Jeddah—until the transition during COVID made it a co-ed university.”

She highlights her passion for empowering women in **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and**

Mathematics) disciplines. Beyond academia, her interest extended into industry advancements, particularly within the built environment.

During her tenure, she spearheaded several pioneering milestones, including launching **Saudi Arabia's first Master of Science in Energy Engineering for women**, overseeing the first female graduates in **MSc in Energy Engineering**, and establishing research centers in **Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, and Sustainable Energy**.

Her passion for project management emerged from teaching students about the critical role of execution in project delivery. She emphasized not only the technical aspects but also the importance of methodologies, frameworks, and structured processes—elements that are vital for achieving successful project outcomes in an evolving and complex industry.

How did you transition into project delivery?

"It was after COVID that I felt ready for a new role," Dr. Khulood recalls. "I transitioned into consultancy to broaden my delivery skill set and work on a diverse range of high-impact projects."

This shift exposed her to large-scale government initiatives, deepening her understanding of **project management's vital role in realizing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030**.

"My role came with high expectations—it required delivering results under immense pressure while maintaining the highest standards," she reflects. "Despite the challenges, it reinforced my focus on strategic leadership and the implementation of global best practices."

What were your key takeaways as you delivered on these projects?

"The focus on continuous improvement and the importance of on-the-job learning, along with certifications, stood out to me," Dr. Khulood reflects. "Project management is not just about delivering projects; it is a strategic tool that drives transformation and delivers tangible benefits. Successful project managers always keep stakeholders and end users at the heart of their decision-making. As practitioners, we must always keep stakeholders and end users in mind."

She emphasizes that adaptability, collaboration, and a structured approach to execution are essential when managing complex, large-scale projects.

Tell us about your role at the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU).

"AlUla is on a mission to define itself as a world-renowned cultural, heritage, and tourism destination," Dr. Khulood explains. "The development of AlUla is deeply rooted in sustainable practices, preserving its rich history while embracing **technological and digital transformation**."

The RCU project aims to seamlessly blend tradition with modernity, ensuring AlUla's cultural and historical significance is upheld while positioning it as a leader in sustainable tourism.

What does your role involve in navigating this complex delivery?

“At its core, my role is about driving institutional excellence by harnessing human capabilities to successfully deliver high-impact projects,” she says. “I also apply cutting-edge data analytics to identify what’s making the biggest impact in moving projects forward.”

“At its core, my role focuses on **digital and analytics transformation within the institutional excellence framework**, ensuring that projects are optimized for efficiency and long-term impact. By consolidating data and insights, we enhance operational performance and align project outcomes with strategic objectives. This work involves streamlining digital governance, fostering an environment for agile decision-making, and leveraging data analytics to optimize **project delivery, resource allocation, and risk management.**”

Beyond optimizing internal processes, the role extends to **transforming RCU’s business capabilities**, enhancing collaboration across teams, and ensuring that innovation remains at the forefront of project execution. Driving operational efficiency is a key focus, ensuring that technology-driven solutions not only improve **project execution and stakeholder engagement** but also contribute to the broader economic and cultural transformation of AIUla. The ambition to **pursue digital excellence** ensures that the commission continues to set new benchmarks in sustainable development and digital innovation.

What projects have you worked on, and what innovations have they brought to the community and wider Kingdom?

“My work has been deeply rooted in **human capability development, community empowerment, clean water, clean energy, sustainable development, and digital transformation**. These initiatives are not only focused on **building institutional excellence** but also on equipping individuals with the necessary tools and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to the development of the wider kingdom.

At AIUla, my focus has been on **human capability development projects as well as digital and analytics-related initiatives**. These projects have played a fundamental role in enhancing professional skills, supporting education and training, and fostering a culture of continuous learning. By integrating **digital solutions and data-driven decision-making**, these efforts have significantly improved project governance, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. The combined impact of **technology, human capability enhancement, and data-driven governance** continues to shape AIUla’s success as a globally recognized cultural and economic hub.”

You recently won an Association of Project Management award in the UK. What has been the impact of this recognition? What sets your approach apart?

“Winning this award has been a defining career highlight,” Dr. Khulood acknowledges, crediting her team and the Royal Commission for their commitment to sustainable change and regional development. “It has provided international recognition for our work and reinforced our dedication to excellence.”

Her approach is distinguished by **strategic alignment, integration of advanced technologies, and a**

human-centric focus. She aims to advance **the role of data analytics in improving project success rates**, expand **knowledge-sharing through professional networks**, and implement **strategic innovation frameworks that enhance efficiency and governance within complex project ecosystems**.

When asked about her next professional goals, she explains:

“I am focused on further embedding **data-driven decision-making** into project management frameworks, ensuring that **analytics and emerging technologies** play a pivotal role in **predictive modeling, risk mitigation, and enhanced performance tracking**. By integrating **Industry 4.0 principles—such as automation, AI, and advanced data analytics—alongside Industry 5.0’s human-centric collaboration**, I aim to enhance efficiency while maintaining a strong focus on the people who drive project success.

Strategic alignment is at the core of my approach, ensuring that every initiative **contributes to long-term objectives and national development goals**. Through **cross-industry collaborations**, I am committed to leveraging **international best practices** to **elevate project governance, enhance stakeholder trust, and promote knowledge-sharing** within the Middle East’s evolving project management landscape.

Adaptability is another crucial pillar of my vision—preparing projects to **address future challenges, embrace digital transformation, and remain flexible in an ever-changing environment**. By fostering a **forward-thinking, stakeholder-driven approach**, I strive to **deliver impactful, sustainable results** that not only transform industries but also empower communities and create lasting economic and social values.”

How has your team maintained the necessary standards for success?

“It’s a combination of factors,” Dr. Khulood explains. “An exceptional **Project Management Office (PMO)** oversees project controls, data management, internal communications, and decision-making processes. We carefully define project outcomes and align methodologies with best practices, including those of the **Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Association for Project Management (APM)**, while ensuring that human factors remain central to everything we do.”

What is unique about the Human-Centric Approach to Project Management?

“We place people at the heart of our work,” she says. “Whether internally, in collaboration between project teams, or externally, in building strong relationships with stakeholders and end users. We ensure everyone is involved in the project at every stage and that they are fully invested in its success.”

What challenges and opportunities do you see arising from Saudi Arabia’s 2030 Vision?

“The rigid timeline and **tight deadlines** for completion keeps us conscious of the ticking clock,” Dr. Khulood says. “However, having a transformational vision has aligned our team and raised the bar for what we can achieve. What once seemed impossible is now possible.”

She emphasizes the importance of execution, structure, alignment, and processes. “Technology plays a key role, and we’ve become experts in integrating it into our rapidly evolving program,” she adds.

Another challenge has been the steep learning curve for the region, but Dr. Khalood views it as an opportunity for growth. “Collaborating with more mature international organizations has driven cultural alignment, flexibility, and accelerated knowledge transfer. Our success has come from our agility in managing the demands of a massive, interconnected program.”

What advice do you have for those entering project management, particularly in such large-scale initiatives?

“My advice is simple—master the fundamentals of project management early in your career,” she says.

She encourages aspiring professionals to **gain industry-recognized certifications, develop leadership skills, embrace adaptability, and align their work with long-term strategic objectives**. More than anything, she believes that success in project management comes from the ability to **innovate, learn continuously, and remain committed to excellence**.

Her final words: **“Let the impact of your work inspire you. Keep innovating, keep learning, and always strive for greater success.”**

You can find out more about the transformative projects that **Dr Khulood** is involved with through her [LinkedIn page](#).

And to find out more about the work of the **Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU)** and its role in the Saudi 2030 Vision, visit them [here](#).