The Future of FM in Saudi Arabia: How Muheel Is Building a Standards-Led Maintenance Model



SFG20

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مهيل لإدارة المرافق

MUHEEL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

As Saudi Arabia's FM sector matures in step with Vision 2030, Muheel has partnered with SFG20 to embed structured, auditable maintenance governance across one of the region's most diverse and rapidly growing FM portfolios.

We spoke with Muhammad Irfan Khokhar, CEO of Muheel Facilities Management to explore how SFG20 supports Muheel's wider digital FM strategy, strengthens maintenance governance, and reflects his view on how facilities management in Saudi Arabia is evolving.

Can you briefly describe your role at Muheel and your main responsibilities?



"As CEO of Muheel, my role is to set the strategic direction of the business and ensure that strategy translates into measurable outcomes for our clients, our people and our shareholders.

My focus is on building Muheel as a modern, future-ready FM organisation, with people, technology, sustainability and industry best practices at the centre of how we operate.

This means developing our workforce and leadership capability, using technology and data to improve decisions, embedding sustainability into operations, and continuously strengthening service quality and asset performance, all aligned with our purpose of helping create better places to work and live.

I also believe FM itself is evolving. It is no longer simply about maintaining buildings and delivering services; it is increasingly about protecting asset value, managing risk, enhancing people's experience of the built environment and enabling our clients' wider objectives. Partnerships such as SFG20 support that direction by helping us embed recognised best practice and stronger maintenance governance into our operating model."

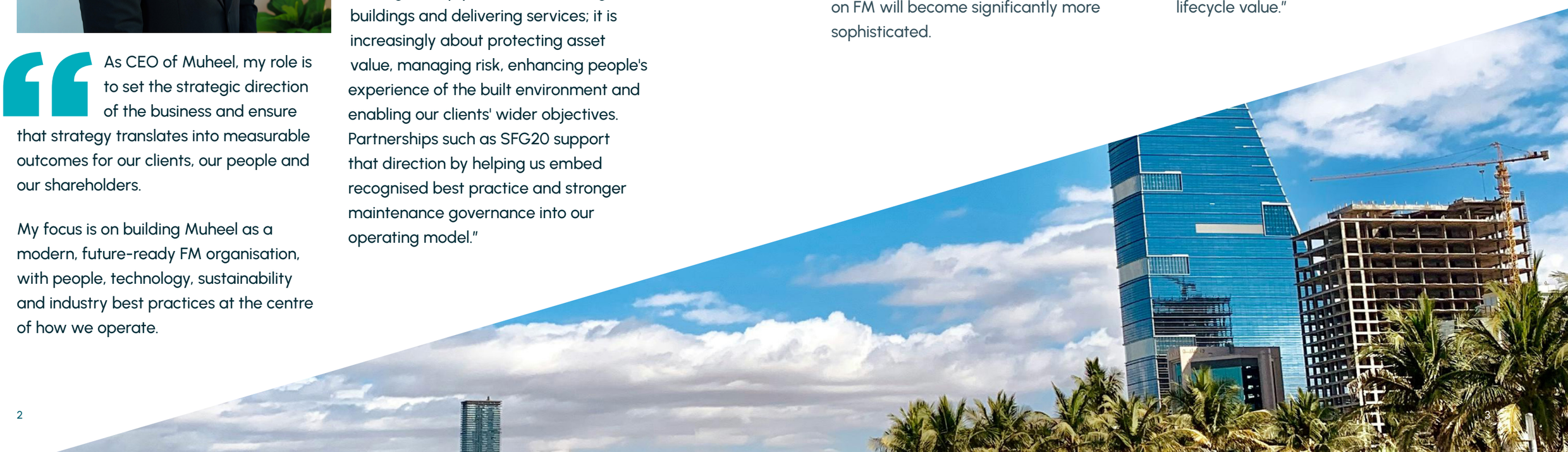
How has the FM sector in Saudi Arabia changed over the last five years, and where do you see it heading over the next five?

"The Saudi FM sector has changed significantly in both scale and maturity. The market is now valued at more than US$30 billion, with continued strong growth expected. Saudi Arabia is experiencing one of the largest construction and development pipelines in the world, while also delivering a new generation of increasingly complex, technology-intensive and high-value assets across infrastructure, tourism, hospitality, healthcare, commercial developments and new urban destinations.

As these assets transition from construction into operation, the demands on FM will become significantly more sophisticated.

The industry is already moving away from predominantly reactive and labour-intensive models towards more integrated, technology-enabled and performance-led delivery. CAFM, IoT, AI, predictive analytics, energy management and stronger asset data are becoming increasingly important.

Over the next five years, I expect the industry to move further from prescriptive and input-based contracts towards output- and ultimately outcome-based models. Clients will increasingly look beyond manpower and tasks completed and focus on what FM is actually delivering: compliance, reliability, energy performance, user experience and lifecycle value."



What role does facilities management play in supporting the ambitions of Vision 2030, particularly as Saudi Arabia brings a new generation of complex, high-value assets into operation?

"Facilities management has a critical role because the success of these investments will ultimately be measured not only by what Saudi Arabia builds, but by how well those assets perform over their entire lifecycle.

FM directly influences reliability, safety, energy performance, user experience, lifecycle cost and long-term asset value.

Increasingly, FM also needs to be involved earlier during design, commissioning and handover so that maintainability and operational readiness are considered before an asset becomes operational.

The sector also has an important role in developing Saudi technical and leadership capability, adopting technology more effectively and supporting the Kingdom's sustainability ambitions. In this environment, FM is no longer simply a support service; it is a strategic enabler that protects investment and ensures that the built environment continues to perform long after construction is complete."

As the built environment in KSA continues to grow and mature, what needs to evolve in the way buildings are maintained, operated and governed?

"The next stage of maturity is about moving from fragmented site-level practices towards stronger asset and maintenance governance. That starts with accurate asset information, clearly defined responsibilities, recognised maintenance standards and reliable digital records.

Technology then gives us the ability to connect these elements. CAFM should provide a reliable operational record of what was required, what was performed, where exceptions exist and how assets are performing.

But the bigger evolution is both commercial and behavioural: moving from inputs to outputs and ultimately outcomes, and from simply following prescriptive rules towards principle-led decision-making.

Standards and procedures remain essential, but they should provide the framework for competent people to make the right decisions based on asset criticality, risk, condition and the desired outcome, rather than following a rule simply because it exists.

Rather than measuring success primarily through manpower, frequencies and completed work orders, the industry should increasingly focus on availability, reliability, compliance, energy performance, user experience and lifecycle value. That evolution requires better data and governance, but also greater professional capability, trust and transparency between clients and FM providers."



Can you describe the scale of Muheel's operations, including the types of buildings, assets and clients you support?

Muheel has a growing and diverse footprint across Saudi Arabia, with operations in more than 23 cities delivering integrated facilities management and specialised services.

Our portfolio spans commercial and residential developments, hospitality, healthcare, education, government, industrial and energy environments, retail and major mixed-use developments.

We therefore support everything from conventional building systems and public spaces to complex MEP infrastructure, critical assets and specialised operating environments.

Our clients include public and private sector organisations, major Saudi companies, government entities, developers and multinational organisations. That diversity exposes our teams to very different asset types, operational risks and client requirements."

What are the main challenges that come with delivering consistency, assurance and transparency across a portfolio of this scale?

The key challenge is preventing uncontrolled variation while recognising that different assets and operating environments legitimately require different maintenance strategies.

We therefore need a common technical baseline and clear governance, but the maintenance regime must still respond to asset criticality, statutory requirements, OEM recommendations, operating conditions and client requirements.

Technology helps provide visibility, but consistency ultimately comes from the combination of good data, competent people, clear accountability and disciplined execution at site level."

Why is structured, auditable and standards-driven maintenance governance important for asset owners, operators and FM providers in the region?

Structured maintenance governance creates clarity and accountability.

It establishes what needs to be maintained, the applicable maintenance regime, who is competent and responsible to perform the work, and what evidence should demonstrate that it has been completed correctly.

For asset owners, this provides greater assurance that risk and maintenance obligations are being actively managed rather than simply assumed to be covered. For FM providers, it creates a more defensible and consistent basis for planning, execution and assurance."

What prompted Muheel to partner with SFG20?

We wanted a recognised and scalable maintenance framework that could support a growing and increasingly diverse portfolio while fitting into our wider digital FM strategy.

SFG20 provides the maintenance standard, MRI Evolution provides the digital environment through which the work can be managed, and Muheel provides the technical governance, engineering judgement and operational capability required to apply it effectively in Saudi Arabia.

It is the combination of those elements that creates value."



What value does having access to an industry-recognised maintenance standard bring to Muheel and its clients?

"An industry-recognised standard gives us a strong technical baseline rather than requiring each site to develop maintenance schedules independently.

For Muheel, SFG20 provides that reference point, but it is not applied in isolation. It must sit alongside Saudi statutory requirements, OEM recommendations, warranty conditions, asset criticality, operating environment, client requirements and engineering judgement.

The objective is therefore not blind standardisation. It is controlled standardisation, where departures from the baseline are technically justified and governed.

SFG20 gives us a common technical reference that can be applied across our portfolio.

When it is linked to the asset register and MRI Evolution, we can create a clear connection between the asset, the approved maintenance regime, the work order, the completed task and the evidence.

This makes maintenance more consistent, transparent and easier to audit."

How does standardised maintenance from day one support the long-term lifecycle value of an asset?

"Starting with the right maintenance strategy from day one helps establish good asset discipline from the beginning of operations. It supports reliability, reduces the risk of premature deterioration and creates a meaningful maintenance and condition history.

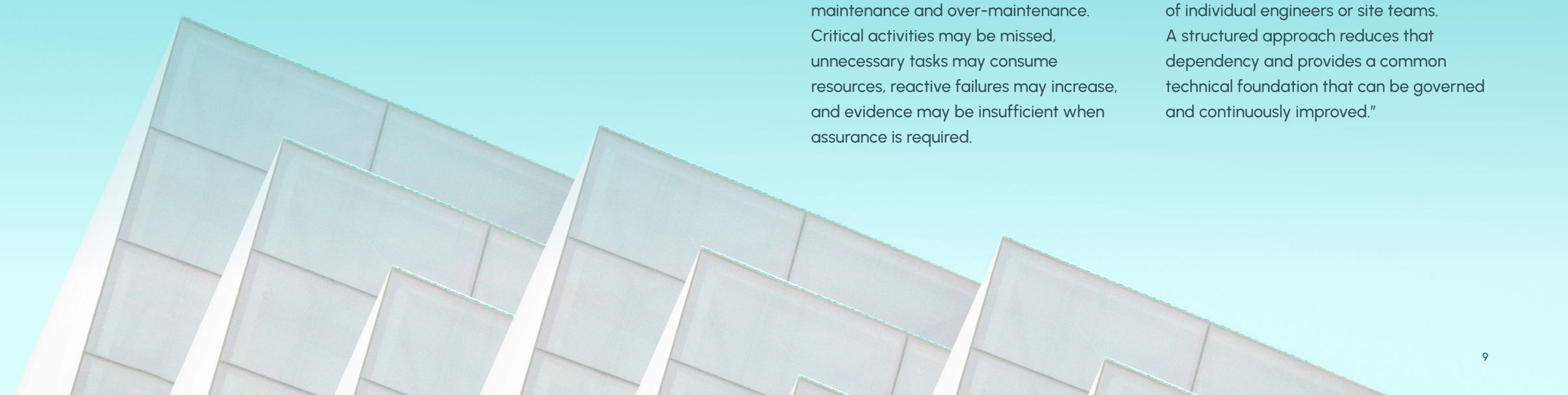
As that information matures, it can inform a Forward Maintenance Register, giving the asset owner visibility of likely repairs, refurbishment, renewal and replacement requirements. This provides a stronger basis for forecasting and allows future OPEX and CAPEX decisions to be prioritised around asset condition, criticality and risk.

Ultimately, good lifecycle management helps answer four fundamental questions: when should we maintain, repair, refurbish or replace an asset?"

What risks can asset owners or FM providers carry when maintenance standards are informal, inconsistent or developed entirely in-house?

"Informal or inconsistent maintenance regimes can result in both under-maintenance and over-maintenance. Critical activities may be missed, unnecessary tasks may consume resources, reactive failures may increase, and evidence may be insufficient when assurance is required.

They can also create compliance, safety and lifecycle risk and make performance overly dependent on the experience of individual engineers or site teams. A structured approach reduces that dependency and provides a common technical foundation that can be governed and continuously improved."



In the FM Middle East partnership announcement, you described SFG20 not as a tick-box exercise but as a strategic imperative. Can you expand on what you meant by that?

"Calling it a strategic imperative means moving beyond simply demonstrating that we have access to a recognised standard. The standard has to influence how maintenance is actually planned, executed, assured and improved.

Our ambition is to create a clear connection between the asset, the appropriate maintenance regime, the work performed, technician competency, the evidence captured and ultimately the performance of that asset. Over time, this gives us the foundation to move beyond task completion towards a more risk-based and outcomes-focused maintenance model.

That is why we see SFG20 as part of our operating framework rather than as a reference document or compliance badge."

What role do you see SFG20 playing in helping the regional FM market move towards greater consistency, assurance and transparency?

"SFG20 can help the market move away from fragmented maintenance schedules and towards a more structured approach. I believe the opportunity is to create a more common technical language for maintenance between asset owners, consultants and FM providers.

A recognised baseline makes it easier to challenge maintenance requirements objectively, identify where risk sits and distinguish between justified technical variation and simple inconsistency.

Muheel's role is to demonstrate how an international maintenance framework can be applied practically within the Saudi operating and regulatory environment."

Muheel is currently in the process of integrating SFG20 with its MRI Evolution CAFM system. What are the key objectives for this stage of the roadmap?

"The main objective is to build a reliable link between our asset data, SFG20 maintenance requirements and MRI Evolution. This means making sure our asset structure is consistent, mapping the correct SFG20 regime to the right assets, validating the mapping and then using MRI Evolution to generate and manage the planned maintenance work.

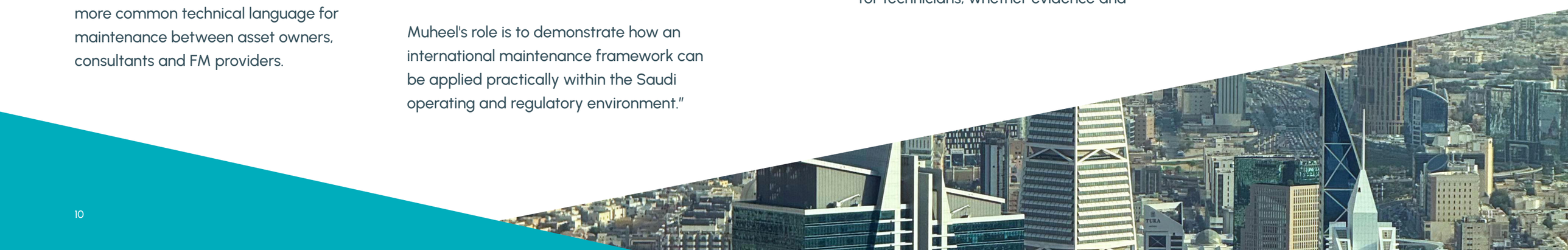
We also want clear traceability so that we can see which standard applies to an asset, what work was generated, what was completed and what evidence was provided. Any difference in maintenance approach between similar assets should have a clear technical, statutory, OEM or operational reason."

What will the pilot projects help Muheel to test, validate or learn?

"The pilots are where we move from theory into operational reality.

We will test whether the asset information is sufficiently accurate, whether the maintenance mapping makes sense under actual site conditions, whether work orders and mobile workflows are practical for technicians, whether evidence and supervisor controls are proportionate, and whether the resulting information is useful to management.

Equally important is user acceptance. A technically sound system that operational teams do not adopt will not deliver the intended value."



What will success look like once the MRI Evolution integration has been rolled out?

"Initially, success is quite practical: reliable asset information, correctly assigned maintenance regimes, strong completion discipline, visible exceptions and clear evidence.

Once that foundation becomes stable, we can begin looking at more meaningful indicators such as overdue maintenance, reactive failure patterns, repeat failures, asset reliability and differences in performance between comparable assets or sites.

That is where the system begins to move from recording maintenance to informing maintenance strategy."

What kind of operational benefits or client value do you expect this approach to unlock over time?

"For Muheel, we expect better consistency, stronger technical control and clearer visibility of maintenance performance.

For clients, the bigger value is assurance: knowing what maintenance their assets require, what has actually been delivered, where risk or exceptions exist, and having better information to support lifecycle and investment decisions.

As the quality of the data improves, we should also be able to optimise maintenance based increasingly on risk, condition and actual asset performance rather than frequency alone.

We will remain evidence-led. Any claims around cost optimisation, energy performance, reliability or asset-life extension should ultimately be demonstrated through verified operational data."

Once the implementation is more mature, what insights or learnings would you like to share with the wider industry?

"We would like to share the practical lessons, including the things that did not work as expected, rather than simply presenting the end result.

One of the most important lessons is likely to be that maintenance transformation is not primarily a software project or a standards project.

It is a change programme involving people, data, technology, technical governance and operational discipline.

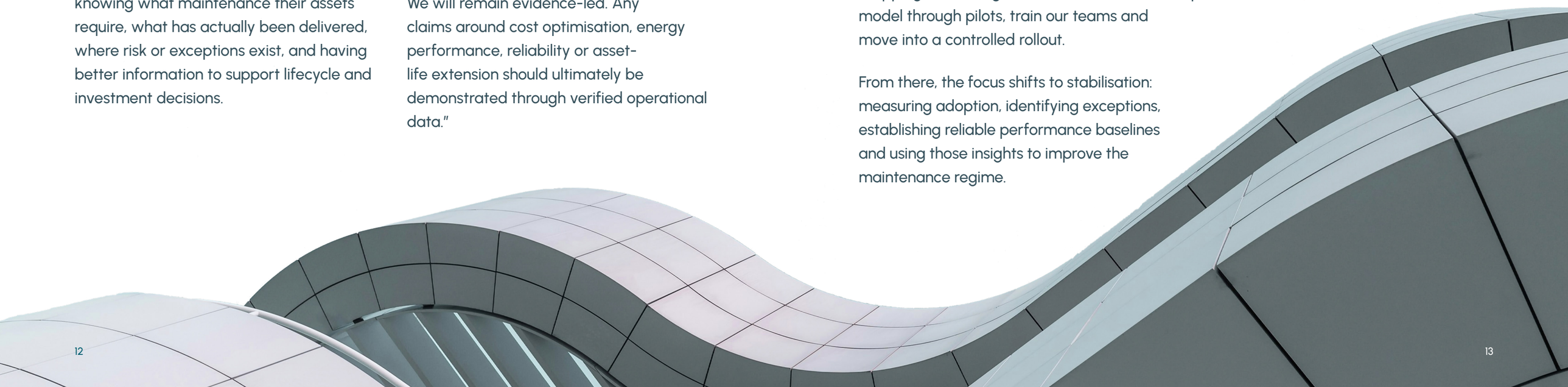
As the programme matures, we also want to share what the data tells us about risk, asset performance and how maintenance strategies can be improved over time. That practical experience can contribute to the wider maturity of FM in Saudi Arabia."

What are the key milestones Muheel is working towards over the next 12 months?

"Our immediate milestones are to establish the data foundation, complete the initial mapping and configuration, validate the model through pilots, train our teams and move into a controlled rollout.

From there, the focus shifts to stabilisation: measuring adoption, identifying exceptions, establishing reliable performance baselines and using those insights to improve the maintenance regime.

We are deliberately taking a phased approach because scaling poor data or an unproven process simply scales the problem."



What are the longer-term ambitions for the partnership with SFG20?

"The longer-term ambition is to move progressively from standardised preventive maintenance towards increasingly risk, condition and performance informed maintenance.

SFG20 provides the technical baseline, MRI Evolution provides the system of record and operational workflow, and Muheel provides the engineering governance and delivery capability.

As our operational history becomes richer, we should be in a stronger position to optimise frequencies, support Forward Maintenance Registers and lifecycle planning, identify failure patterns and, where supported by suitable condition data, operational evidence and monitoring technology, introduce more predictive approaches.

The direction is therefore not simply digitalising PPM. It is about building the information and governance needed to make better asset decisions."

What would you say to other FM providers or asset owners in KSA who are considering a more structured, standards-led approach to maintenance governance?

"A maintenance standard on its own will not transform operations.

The real value comes when it is supported by accurate asset information, integrated into operational workflows, understood by competent teams, backed by clear governance and measured through reliable performance data.

And perhaps most importantly, adoption and stakeholder buy-in need to be treated as seriously as the technology and the standard itself. That is what ultimately turns a maintenance standard into an operational improvement programme."



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