

When a Journal Becomes a Conversation¹

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

21 July 2026

Ref: Reflections on the July 2026 PM World Journal

Dear David,

After spending several evenings with the July 2026 edition of the PMWJ, I found myself thinking less about the individual papers than about the publication itself and the place it has gradually come to occupy within our profession.

Like many readers, I began with the subjects closest to my own interests. That was my intention, at least. Before long I had drifted into healthcare supply chains, post-war peacebuilding in Syria, educational reform, sustainability, governance, artificial intelligence, and several topics that, on the surface, seemed to have little connection with the projects I manage. Somewhere along that journey, the journal stopped feeling like a collection of independent articles and began to resemble an extended conversation. Authors writing from different countries, industries, and intellectual traditions appeared to be approaching the same underlying questions from different directions.

That realization encouraged me to write, not simply to congratulate you on another successful issue, but to thank you, the editorial team, reviewers, correspondents, and every contributor whose work collectively made that conversation possible.

As both a contributor and an International Correspondent for the PMWJ, I experience the publication from two very different perspectives. I know the discipline required to prepare a manuscript for publication, the revisions, the self-doubt, and the effort to make an argument clearer than it first appeared. Yet I also experience the journal as an ordinary reader who opens each monthly edition wondering what unfamiliar ideas, experiences, or perspectives colleagues around the world will bring into view.

Those two experiences reinforce one another. Writing encourages me to examine my own assumptions more carefully. Reading reminds me how incomplete my own understanding remains.

One aspect of the July edition that stayed with me was the way apparently unrelated papers gradually revealed common concerns. Governance appeared repeatedly,

¹ How to cite this work: Niroula, Y. R. (2026). When a Journal Becomes a Conversation, Letter to the Editor, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XV, Issue VIII, August.

whether through discussions of gateway reviews, program stewardship, organizational maturity, or the institutional conditions that influence project success and failure. Artificial intelligence also surfaced throughout the issue, but what struck me was the restraint with which it was treated. Rather than presenting AI as a destination in itself, contributors explored its relationship with judgement, leadership, governance, standards, and professional responsibility.

Bob Prieto's paper introducing the Quantum Fragility Index added another thought-provoking dimension to that discussion. Traditional project controls have become increasingly sophisticated in measuring performance, variance, probability, and exposure. His argument suggests that these measures may still overlook something equally significant: how close a complex project may be to a tipping point where ordinary variation produces disproportionate consequences. The distinction between measuring risk and measuring fragility is subtle, but it raises a question that extends well beyond the paper itself. Projects do not always fail because an identifiable risk materializes. Sometimes they fail because the underlying system has become less capable of absorbing normal disturbance than anyone realizes. Whether or not every aspect of the proposed framework gains widespread acceptance, the paper succeeds in doing something that worthwhile research should always attempt. It encourages readers to reconsider assumptions that have become almost invisible through familiarity.

Reading these papers consecutively suggested something larger than the sum of their individual contributions. Project management gradually appears to be shifting its attention away from improving isolated techniques toward understanding how judgement should operate when technology, uncertainty, organizational complexity, resilience, and accountability continually interact. That feels like a significant evolution in the profession.

The issue established that broader perspective from its opening pages through the tributes to Klaus Pannenbäcker and Max Wideman. Those reflections reminded us that professional disciplines do not advance solely through standards or methodologies. They advance because individuals devote years, often decades, to questioning accepted practice, mentoring others, building institutions, and leaving ideas that continue to influence people they may never meet. Beginning the journal with those tributes quietly framed everything that followed. It reminded readers that every published article exists within a much longer conversation extending across generations.

I was equally struck by the remarkable breadth of the July edition without any corresponding loss of coherence. Healthcare logistics, disaster response, construction quality, oil and gas investment, educational reform, sustainability, and post-conflict reconstruction could easily have become disconnected topics competing for attention. Instead, reading them consecutively revealed recurring patterns.

Different industries continue to confront remarkably similar dilemmas.

How should organizations govern increasingly complex programs?

How should decisions be made when available information remains incomplete?

How should competing objectives be balanced when every decision affects people, institutions, and communities differently?

The contexts change. The questions persist.

Perhaps that explains why the PMWJ occupies a distinctive position within project management publishing. Academic journals naturally emphasize methodological rigor and original research. Professional magazines often prioritize practical application and immediate relevance. The PMWJ has resisted treating those perspectives as competing alternatives. Instead, it allows them to coexist.

Within this single issue, peer-reviewed research sits comfortably alongside advisory articles, historical reflections, student papers, regional reports, interviews, readers' letters, commentaries, and book reviews. None of those sections feels peripheral. Each contributes something different to the larger conversation. The result is that theory remains connected to practice instead of becoming isolated from it.

That editorial philosophy deserves recognition because knowledge rarely develops in only one place.

Universities contribute rigorous research and theoretical frameworks. Construction sites, humanitarian programs, engineering consultancies, government agencies, and project offices contribute experience that continually tests those theories under conditions that researchers cannot fully reproduce. Neither source is sufficient by itself. Research without practical application risks becoming detached from reality. Practice without reflection risks repeating familiar mistakes simply because they have become familiar. A publication that respects both forms of knowledge strengthens each.

My own experience writing for the PMWJ has reinforced that lesson.

Preparing a paper has rarely confirmed what I already believed. More often, it has changed the way I think about projects I have managed.

Writing requires returning to decisions that once seemed straightforward and asking questions that never occurred at the time. Why did we reach that conclusion? What assumptions shaped our judgement? Which evidence influenced us, and which evidence did we overlook? What alternative explanations now seem plausible that we never considered then?

The most valuable lesson I have learned through publication is that writing is not merely a way of communicating understanding. It is one of the most demanding ways of discovering where understanding remains incomplete.

For that reason, I particularly appreciate the opportunities the PMWJ continues to provide for emerging authors. Many experienced practitioners hesitate to write because they assume publication belongs primarily to academics or established researchers. The journal challenges that assumption.

Some of the most thoughtful contributions emerge from practitioners working under genuine constraints, making difficult decisions with incomplete information rather than ideal conditions. Practical experience alone does not produce good writing, just as academic credentials alone do not produce worthwhile insight. What matters is careful observation, intellectual honesty, and a willingness to examine experience critically. By welcoming contributions on that basis rather than on reputation alone, the PMWJ broadens the profession's collective understanding.

The continued inclusion of regional reports deserves similar recognition. They sometimes receive less attention than the featured papers, yet I increasingly regard them as among the journal's most valuable sections. They reveal how project management continues to evolve within different national contexts while reminding readers that many professional challenges remain surprisingly universal.

This month's regional reports illustrated that balance particularly well. Each reflected its own circumstances and priorities. Read together, they offered something larger than individual national updates. They reminded us that project management has become genuinely international, while remaining deeply shaped by local institutions, cultures, economies, and histories.

Seeing my own featured paper published alongside the Nepal report reinforced another quality I have long admired about the PMWJ.

Whether a contribution comes from an internationally recognized authority, an experienced practitioner, a doctoral researcher, a student, or someone submitting a first manuscript, every contribution enters the same conversation. Reputation may attract initial attention, but ideas ultimately receive equal consideration. That editorial culture is uncommon, and I suspect it explains much of the loyalty the journal enjoys among both readers and contributors.

Producing a monthly publication approaching one thousand pages is, by itself, an impressive editorial accomplishment. Yet the journal's significance lies elsewhere.

Large publications often become fragmented simply because they attempt to include too much. What distinguishes this issue is not its size but its coherence. It encourages readers to move across industries, disciplines, generations, and schools of thought without losing sight of the larger questions connecting them. Achieving that coherence requires editorial judgement that is every bit as demanding as editorial effort.

I sincerely hope the PMWJ continues encouraging new contributors to participate.

Every respected author once submitted a first manuscript with some uncertainty. Every experienced project professional began with more questions than answers. A publication willing to make room for established scholarship alongside emerging voices performs a service extending well beyond publication itself. It creates an environment where experience can be examined rather than merely accumulated, where assumptions remain open to challenge, and where professional knowledge advances through thoughtful dialogue instead of unquestioned consensus.

Please accept my sincere appreciation to you, the editorial team, reviewers, correspondents, and every author who contributed to this exceptional edition.

Month after month, you publish far more than a journal. You sustain an international community in which ideas are examined carefully, disagreements remain constructive, experience is shared generously, and learning continues to be understood as a collective rather than an individual endeavor.

It has been a privilege to contribute to the PMWJ.

It has been an even greater privilege to keep learning from it.

With warm regards,

[Yamanta Raj Niroula, PMP](#)

Kathmandu, Nepal