

DEVELOPPEMENT DES ÉCOSYSTÈMES NATIONAUX DE VOLONTARIAT EN AFRIQUE

SUMMARY: REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGNING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER MISSIONS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	05
1. CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION	07
1.1. The challenges of volunteering in Africa	08
1.2. The DENVA programme: framework and governance	08
1.3. Why adopt a harmonised reference framework?	09
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	11
2.1. Definition and characteristics of volunteering	12
2.2. The volunteering mission: framework and intended outcomes	12
2.3. Designing volunteering mission: process and challenges	12
2.4. Criteria for a successful volunteering mission	13
2.5. Host organisations: types and roles	13
3. METHODOLOGY FOR DESIGNING VOLUNTEERING MISSIONS	15
3.1. Overview of the process	16
3.2. Step 1: Identifying needs and analysing priorities	17
3.3. Step 2: Identification and evaluation of host organisations	17
3.4. Step 3: Sizing and structuring the mission	18
3.5. Step 4: Contractualisation	19
4. STAKEHOLDERS AND GOVERNANCE	23
5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	25
5.1. Objectives of the revision	26
5.2. Stakeholders involved in the revision	26
5.3. Evaluation methodology and approach	27
5.4. Procedure for updating the framework	28
CONCLUSION	30



INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the document

This document summarises the Reference Framework for designing Volunteering Missions developed as part of the DENVA programme. This reference framework, the result of a collaborative effort between 12 African countries, proposes a harmonised methodology for designing, structuring, and deploying high-quality volunteering missions.

This summary covers the key elements of the original reference framework, making them accessible to both decision-makers and practitioners in the field. It retains the logic of the source document while offering a more condensed reading.

Scope and ambition

The reference framework is part of a drive to professionalise volunteerism in Africa. It responds to a shared observation: current practices for designing missions are often based on empirical knowledge passed on informally, which is not very formalised and difficult to transfer from one context to another.

The ambition is threefold. First, to clarify processes by precisely defining the roles, responsibilities, and limits of each actor. Second, to professionalise volunteer engagement by promoting volunteering as a structured and measurable contribution to development. Finally, to harmonise practices at the continental level while respecting national contexts.

Target audience

This summary is intended for technicians from national volunteer agencies in charge of strategic and operational development, development officers working in organisations interested in integrating volunteerism into their programmes, managers of NGOs and associations designing volunteer projects/programmes, as well as trainers and coaches working in the sector.





1 _____

CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

1.1. The challenges of volunteering in Africa

Africa is undergoing a major demographic transition. Its young, rapidly expanding population faces multiple challenges: limited access to employment, the need for skills suited to the labour market, aspirations for mobility and a desire for civic engagement. In this context, institutional volunteering is emerging as an innovative response that combines personal development, social utility and local capacity building.

Volunteering represents a triple strategic lever for the continent. For young people, it offers a pathway to acquiring skills, professional experience and employability. For communities, it provides human resources committed to

local development. For governments, it is a public policy tool that contributes to social cohesion and the achievement of development objectives.

However, existing national volunteering schemes suffer from a lack of coordination, harmonisation and mutual recognition. This fragmentation limits the collective impact of African volunteering and reduces opportunities for intra-African mobility for young volunteers. Existing guides and procedures are generally designed for specific organisational or national contexts and are not easily transferable to other environments.

1.2. The DENVA programme: framework and governance

The Development of National Volunteering Ecosystems in Africa programme, launched in February 2024 in Lomé, aims to transform institutional volunteering in Africa. Its objective is to make volunteering a strategic lever for human development, social cohesion and youth employability.

The programme is 83% funded by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Its implementation is entrusted to a consortium of National Volunteering Agencies/Programmes (A/PNV) coordinated by France Volontaires, in partnership with the National Volunteering Agency in Togo. This configuration ensures a link between international expertise and regional roots.

The programme is structured around four complementary strategic areas. The first area, led by Côte d'Ivoire, supports the deployment

of volunteers through a mechanism for calling for innovative projects. The second area, led by Togo, aims to professionalise the engagement professions through professional exchanges, thematic workshops and the deployment of international volunteers to support national agencies. The third area, led by Benin, strengthens cooperation between national schemes by drawing on a legal study on mobility conditions and calls for projects for South-South and South-North missions. The fourth area, led by Cameroon, develops institutional advocacy for the recognition of volunteering in public policies.

Governance is based on an operational committee of the consortium of National Volunteering Agencies and technical coordination for each area, ensuring collective decision-making and ongoing coordination.

1.3. Why a harmonised framework?

Currently, African volunteer organisations deploy processes based on their internal experiences or inspired by international organisational models. Although effective locally, these approaches have several limitations. They are based on empirical knowledge passed on informally. They are rarely formalised in reproducible methodological documents. They are difficult to transpose to other environments, limiting opportunities for mutual learning.

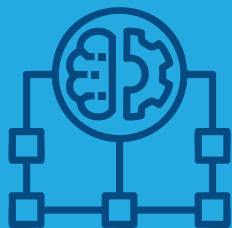
This situation contributes to slowing down the qualitative development of African volunteering and limits its recognition as a real lever for socio-economic development.

The harmonised framework offers four strategic benefits. It clarifies processes to avoid misunderstandings between stakeholders and ensure a shared understanding of the issues at stake. It professionalises engagement by strengthening the credibility of national agencies with their technical and financial

partners. It systematically enhances the value of volunteers' experiences by structuring dialogue around the needs, skills and expectations of all parties involved. It harmonises practices across the continent by serving as a common basis for training supervisors and facilitating the exchange of experiences between partner countries.

The development of the reference framework was based on a participatory approach rooted in field experience. A preparatory analysis of national practices made it possible to gather detailed and comparable information on mission set-up processes in the 12 countries. A regional workshop for collective development, organised in April 2025 in Lomé, brought together 18 participants representing national agencies to co-produce the content of the reference framework. This approach ensures that the reference framework accurately reflects the needs, constraints and innovations of volunteer practitioners.







2 --- CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The development of a volunteer mission is based on a shared understanding of fundamental concepts. This section provides harmonised definitions based on an analysis of the practices of DENVA programme partner countries.

2.1. Definition and characteristics of volunteerism

Volunteerism refers to a free, selfless commitment to the public interest. It is characterised by four fundamental elements: freedom of commitment, which implies that there is no coercion in the decision to commit; disinterestedness, implying the absence of salary remuneration despite possible subsistence allowances; social utility, through contribution to causes of general interest in priority sectors such as education,

health or the environment; and institutional supervision, guaranteeing the quality and safety of interventions within structured organisations. In DENVA countries, two main forms coexist: national volunteering, mobilising skilled volunteers, civic engagement and senior citizens, and international volunteering, promoting intercultural exchanges and South-South or South-North cooperation.

2.2. The volunteering mission: framework and objectives

Volunteering is a formal commitment, full-time or part-time and for a limited period, to serve causes of general interest within an organised framework. It is an unpaid activity carried out freely, contributing to social, educational, humanitarian, cultural or environmental initiatives, without replacing paid employment. It has three strategic objectives. For the volunteer, it offers an opportunity to develop skills, gain professional

experience and improve employability. For the host organisation, it provides capacity building, complementary skills and a boost to team morale. For society, it contributes to social cohesion, the implementation of public policies and the promotion of values of solidarity and civic engagement.

2.3. Designing volunteering mission: process and challenges

Designing volunteering assignments is a participatory process through which the volunteering stakeholders involved, identify, design, structure and formalise volunteering assignments. This process aims to optimise the match between the needs of host organisations, the skills of volunteers and the development objectives pursued.

This process is an operational planning tool that links the various functions of volunteer management: recruitment, training, support and monitoring/evaluation. It is also a strategic lever for optimising the allocation of resources in a sustainable development approach.

Four guiding principles inform the design of assignments. Co-construction means that all stakeholders actively participate in defining assignments and how they are carried out. Strategic alignment ensures that assignments are in line with national development priorities and respond to local needs identified through a participatory process. Quality requires that each mission meet criteria of excellence that guarantee its social impact and added value for all stakeholders. Sustainability ensures that missions contribute to structural transformations beyond the volunteer's period of engagement.

2.4. Criteria for a successful volunteer mission

An analysis of best practices identifies ten fundamental criteria for the success of a volunteer mission, collectively validated by practitioners. Three criteria relate to design: the mission must be co-constructed and desired by all stakeholders, the host organisation must recognise the volunteer's training process, and the mission must complement paid work without replacing it. Three criteria relate to hosting capacity: adequacy of available

resources, match between the volunteer's profile and the planned activities, and realism of the duration in relation to the objectives. Two criteria relate to support: appointment of a mentor and overall consideration of the individual. Two criteria relate to impact: lasting transformation for all stakeholders and leverage effect on the volunteer's career path.

2.5. Host organisations: types and roles

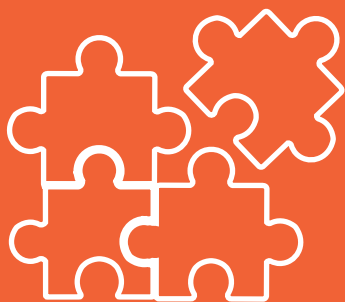
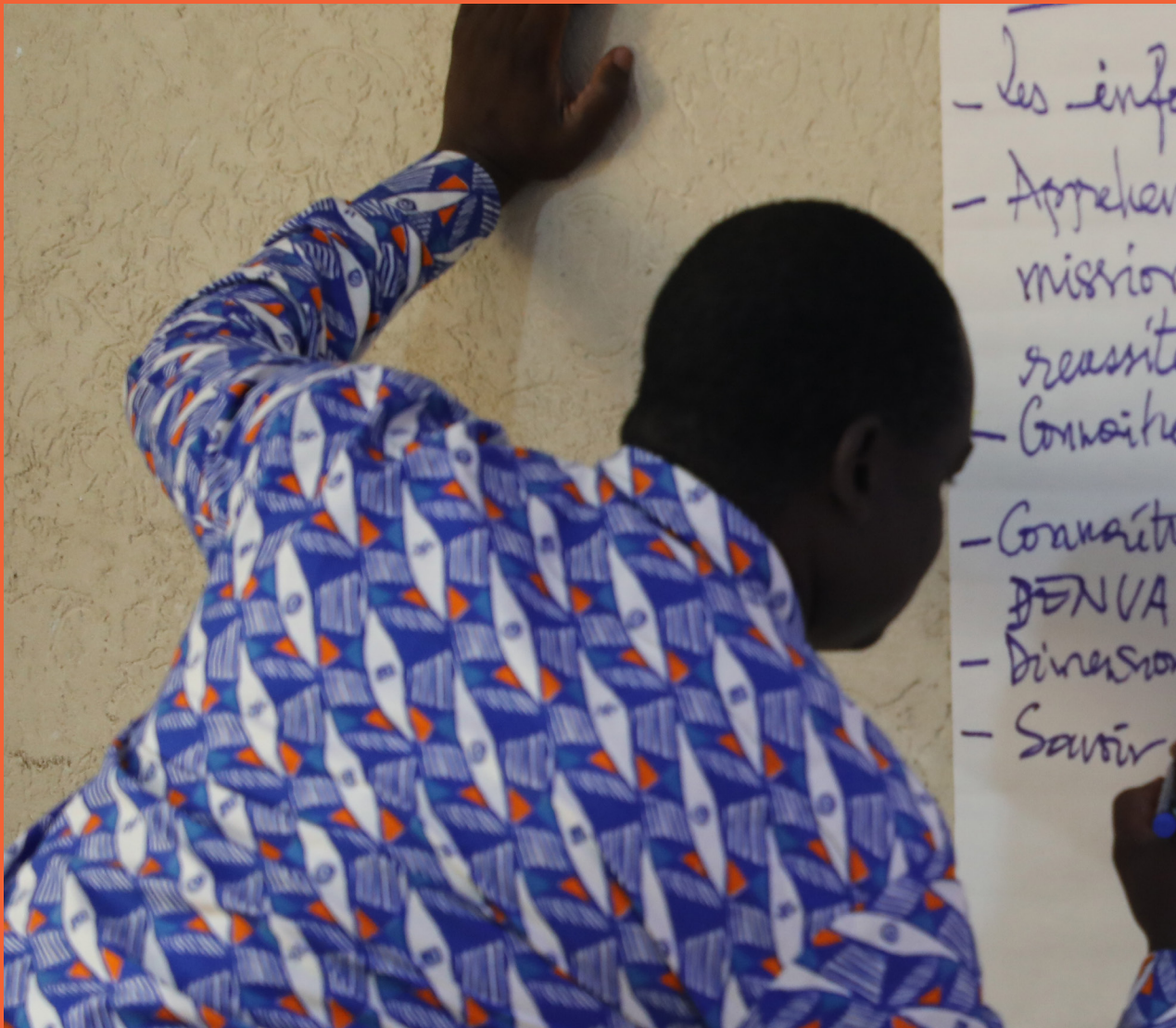
Host organisations are public or non-profit organisations that identify volunteer needs and provide a suitable environment for carrying out missions of general interest. They are the essential operational partners of the volunteering scheme.

The diversity of host organisations reflects the variety of sectors in which volunteering takes place. They include public administrations, local authorities, educational and health establishments, non-governmental

organisations, local associations, cooperatives and social enterprises. Each type of organisation has specific characteristics in terms of capacity, available resources and supervision arrangements.

This shared conceptual understanding forms the basis for the entire process of designing volunteering missions described in the following sections.





ormations sur la mission
ider le contexte de la
n et les conditions de
e de la mission.
e FV et l'Histoire du volontariat
e davantage le programme
nement de la mission.

3

METHODOLOGY FOR DESIGNING VOLUNTEERING MISSIONS



Designing a volunteer mission is a structured process that transforms the identification of a social need into an operational, supervised and impactful mission. This section describes the harmonised process collectively validated by the DENVA programme partner countries.

3.1. Overview of the process

The mission development process is structured around four main stages, broken down into fifteen operational phases. This structure provides a methodology that can be adapted to specific national circumstances while ensuring overall consistency.

The first stage focuses on identifying issues and analysing needs related to priority and strategic sectors. It comprises four phases:

- identifying and analysing priorities in relation to local and national policies,
- determining opportunities for volunteer intervention,
- analysing feasibility and developing the volunteering project, and
- mobilising resources.

The second stage involves identifying host

organisations. It also consists of four phases:

- mobilising potential host organisations,
- gathering mission requirements,
- assessing the host capacity of the requesting organisations, and
- in-depth assessment of hosting capacities and mission relevance.

The third stage deals with the scope of the mission. It consists of five phases:

- structuring the missions,
- designing the monitoring and support system,
- the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system,

- formulating contextualised mission sheets, and
- building a deployment schedule.
- the signing of agreements with host organisations and partners.

The fourth stage finalises the process through contractualisation. It comprises two phases:

- the breakdown of stakeholder commitments and

Each stage determines the quality of the following ones. The rigour applied from the moment needs are identified determines the relevance of the missions deployed and their impact on development.

3.2. Stage 1: Identification of needs and analysis of priorities

This first stage forms the basis of the mission planning process, which aims to align volunteer missions with national and local priorities. It comprises four phases:

- **Identification and analysis of priorities:** diagnosis of priority needs through a review of documentation, observation of the environment including the SDGs and Agenda 2063, and discussions with key stakeholders. Deliverables: summary of priorities, mapping of needs, database of stakeholders.
- **Determination of opportunities for intervention:** assessment of areas where volunteering adds value, prioritisation of challenges and elimination of irrelevant sectors. Deliverables: table of opportunities, reference framework for typical missions.
- **Feasibility analysis and project development:** assessment of legal, technical, financial and organisational viability. Deliverables: project document with timetable and performance measurement framework.
- **Resource mobilisation:** securing resources by leveraging the government's commitment to mobilise additional funding.

3.3. Stage 2: Identification and evaluation of host structures

This second stage forms the bridge between the defined strategy and its practical implementation. It aims to identify, evaluate and select organisations capable of hosting volunteers under optimal conditions. It comprises four phases:

- **Mobilisation of potential host organisations:** actions to generate interest among organisations through awareness-raising, active prospecting in priority sectors, and the organisation of information sessions. Deliverables: database of interested organisations, expanded partner network.
- **Compilation of mission requirements:** methodical collection of requirements expressed by organisations, assistance with formalising requests, and prioritisation according to relevance and feasibility. Deliverables: qualified database of potential missions, mapping of requirements by territory.
- **Assessment of applicant organisations' capacities:** pre-assessment to identify organisations with promising potential, determination of support needs, and planning of follow-up towards host organisation status.
- **In-depth assessment:** verification of institutional eligibility, analysis of available resources and management capacities. Deliverables: consolidated assessment report, list of qualified structures.

3.4. Step 3: Sizing and structuring the mission

This third step transforms the validated needs and assessed hosting capacities into concrete operational missions, defines the support modalities, and establishes the essential management tools. It comprises five phases:

- Structuring of missions: formulation of mission sheets with measurable objectives, expected results, activities and SMART indicators, in line with national priorities and SDGs. Deliverables: validated logical framework, structured mission sheets, performance measurement plan.
 - Design of the monitoring and support system: implementation of technical support, psychosocial support and safety measures around three key moments (pre-departure, during and post-mission).
- Deliverables: support plan, safety protocols, mentoring system.
- Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system: establishment of a real-time steering system involving all stakeholders. Deliverables: operational system, monitoring schedule, reporting framework.
 - Formulation of contextualised mission sheets: adaptation to the specific realities of each context, serving as a reference for recruitment, training and support.
 - Development of a deployment schedule: detailed plan incorporating all key stages and contextual constraints.



3.5. Stage 4: Contractualisation

This fourth stage formalises the commitments of all stakeholders in accordance with national legislative frameworks. It marks the culmination of the set-up process and the starting point for the deployment of volunteers. It comprises two phases:

- Breakdown of stakeholder commitments: concrete translation of each actor's responsibilities, specifying who does what, when, how and with what resources. It transforms agreements in principle into contractual obligations through the reading of framework agreements, participatory workshops and the development of responsibility sheets. Deliverables: secondment agreement,

volunteer contract, memoranda of understanding, table of responsibilities.

- Signing of agreements: formalisation of commitments in the form of contracts through negotiation sessions, institutional validation, signing ceremony and secure archiving. Deliverables: legally binding agreements, directory of partner organisations, database of available missions.

At the end of this stage, national schemes will have clarified commitments, signed agreements, a network of officially committed partners and a secure legal framework.





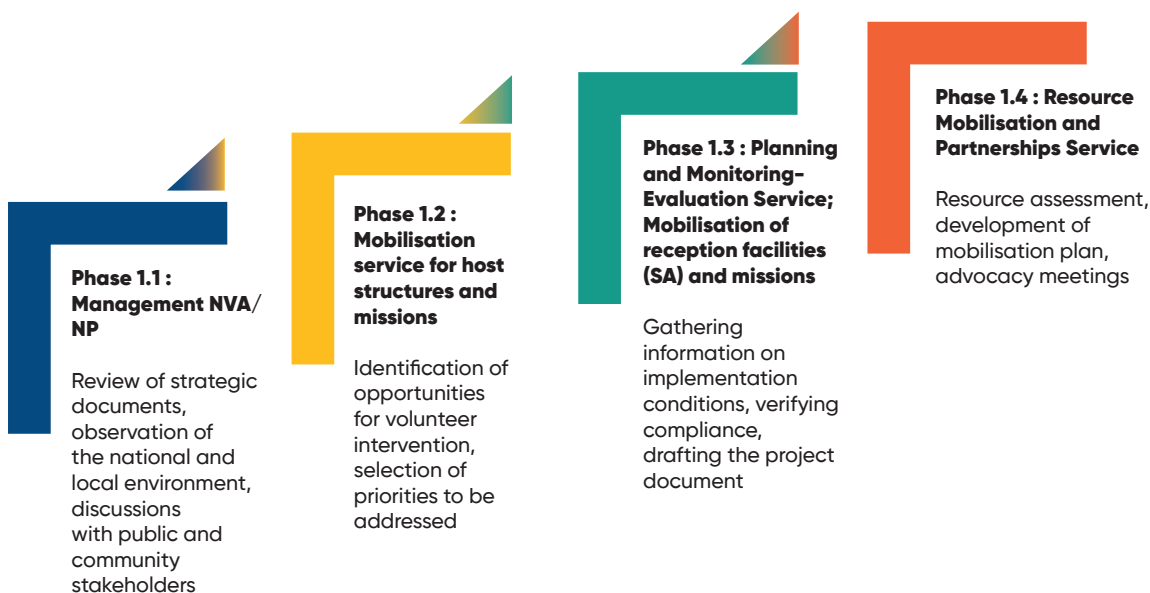


4 --- STAKEHOLDERS AND GOVERNANCE

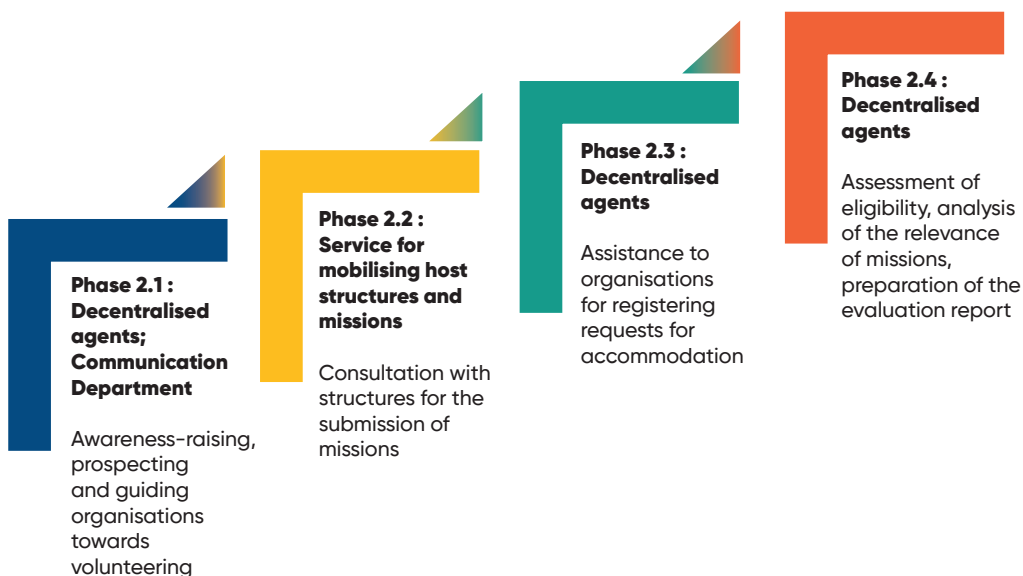
The successful planning of volunteer assignments depends on the coordination of actors with complementary roles within a structured ecosystem. This section presents a map of the stakeholders involved in the process and the distribution of their responsibilities.

The volunteering ecosystem mobilises five main categories of actors (public institutional actors, host organisations, technical and financial partners, field actors, support actors), whose contributions complement each other to ensure the success of the missions.

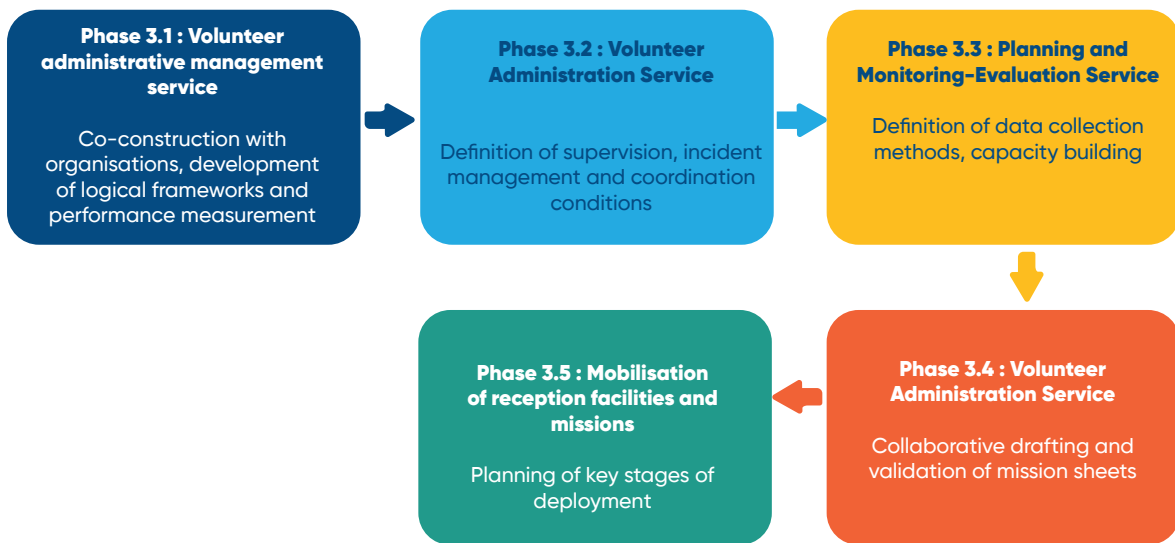
STEP 1: Identification of needs and analysis of priorities



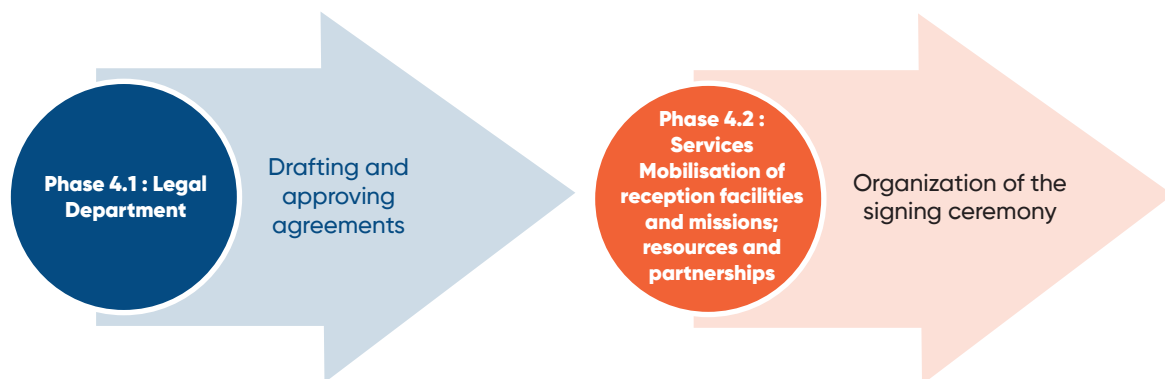
STEP 2: Identification and evaluation of host organisations



STEP 3: Sizing and structuring the mission



STEP 4: Contractualization



This distribution must be adapted to the specific organisational characteristics of each country while maintaining the overall coordination logic to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the process. The success of the mission ultimately depends on the ability to mobilise

and coordinate this diversity of actors around shared objectives, respecting the specific characteristics of each while maintaining the overall coherence of the national volunteering system.





5 ——— MONITORING, EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The volunteer mission set-up framework is intended to be a living tool, designed to evolve in line with feedback and changes in the African context. This section presents the updating mechanisms and performance indicators that ensure its relevance over time.

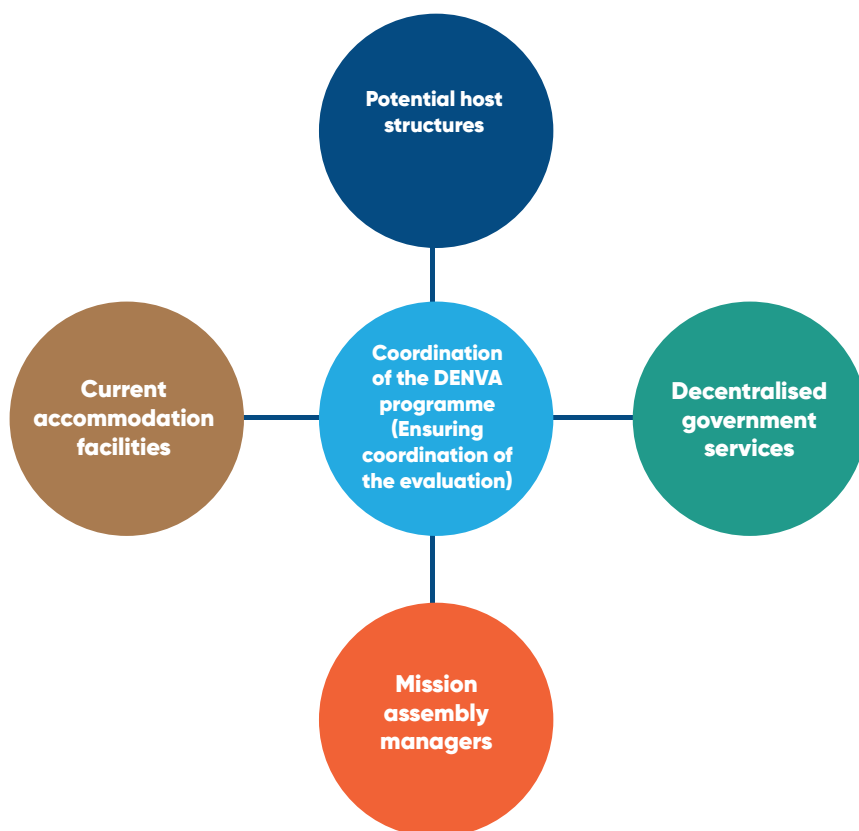
5.1. Objectives of the revision

The updating of the reference framework is based on a continuous improvement approach that recognises the evolving nature of volunteering practices. This approach creates a collective learning ecosystem where experiences in the field feed into the development of the tool. It has four complementary objectives:

- identify differences and similarities in the use of the proposed tools,
- analyse the operational challenges encountered in applying the reference framework,
- capitalise on innovations and adaptation strategies developed by users, and
- optimise processes by adjusting procedures based on feedback.

5.2. Stakeholders involved in the revision

The process of updating the reference framework relies on the involvement of key players in the value chain, whose diversity is a key lever for relevance.



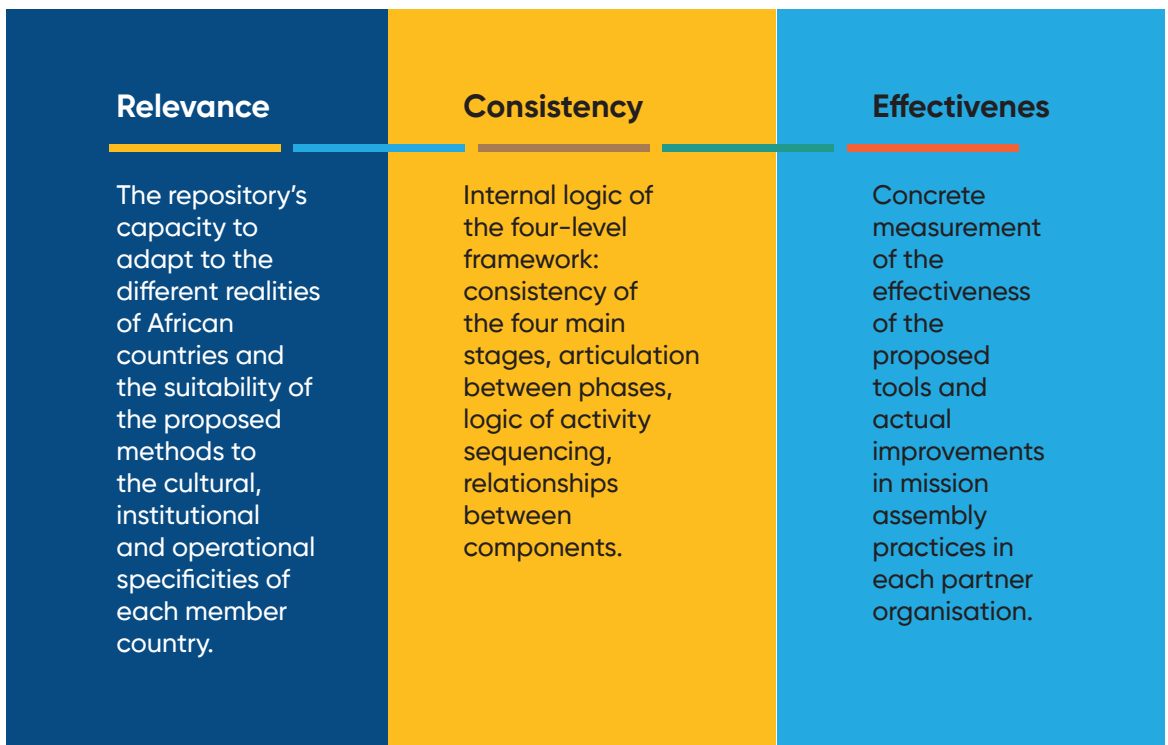
The interaction between these stakeholders ensures a cross-cutting, grounded and evolving vision of volunteering.

5.3. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation of the reference framework is based on a triangular approach drawing on multiple sources. It aims to produce a comprehensive, objective and contextualised reading of the effective implementation of the tool. Three complementary methodological pillars structure this analysis mechanism:

- The first pillar is **participatory data collection from stakeholders**. Carried out at the end of the year, it draws on feedback from operational actors through a dedicated digital tool that collects detailed, standardised data on each component of the framework. All profiles of actors in the mission assembly chain are involved, ensuring a diversity of viewpoints and extensive coverage of application contexts.
- **In-depth documentary analysis** forms the second pillar. A specialised reading grid systematically accompanies the review of the organisations' activity reports to identify the results obtained, best practices and discrepancies. This analysis makes it possible to consolidate a rich, contextualised and cross-cutting empirical base and to compare the subjective perceptions resulting from the participatory collection with objective data.
- **The multi-criteria evaluation system** constitutes the third pillar. It structures the analysis according to six predefined dimensions, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and relevance of the reference framework.

5.4. Procedure for updating the framework



Efficiency

Rational use of financial, human and technical resources throughout all stages of mission preparation.

Impact

Changes in the institutional performance of organisations that have used the framework, based on a comparative analysis before and after its implementation.

Durability

The repository's capacity to generate lasting changes in the practices of voluntary organisations and to maintain improvements over time.

The updating procedure is activated by a continuous monitoring mechanism that identifies malfunctions in the application of the reference framework. This monitoring is based on two main sources: difficulties identified by National Volunteering Agencies during operational use, and systematic analysis of the annual evaluation report, which summarises cross-cutting trends.

The analysis of determining factors examines four critical dimensions that may impact the relevance of the reference framework: changes in national and international legal frameworks governing volunteering; transformations in institutional frameworks, including administrative reforms and organisational restructuring; changes in the African socio-political context that influence the conditions under which volunteering structures operate; and adaptation to new realities on the ground that require methodological and operational adjustments.

The collaborative updating process takes place in four stages. The prior distribution of the evaluation report to all members of

the DENVA network allows organisations to familiarise themselves with the findings and prepare their technical contributions. The participatory consultation communicates the priority areas for improvement to member organisations and facilitates the preparation of proposals for change. Collaborative technical workshops bring together representatives of member organisations for a co-construction process where field experience, technical expertise and strategic analysis converge to develop changes to the reference framework. Institutional validation confers legitimacy on the changes made and ensures their adoption by the entire DENVA ecosystem.

The updating procedure is characterised by its operational flexibility, allowing for targeted interventions according to the scope and nature of the needs identified. Three levels of intervention are possible: ad hoc updating of a specific aspect when malfunctions are limited to a particular area (), multidimensional updating of several aspects simultaneously when issues are interconnected, and comprehensive updating of the entire reference framework when contextual changes require a major

structural overhaul.

This modular approach ensures optimised use of available resources while maintaining the overall consistency of the reference framework.

It allows for responsiveness tailored to the urgency and scale of the changes required, thereby contributing to the continued relevance of the tool.



CONCLUSION

This reference framework for designing volunteer missions represents a significant step forward in the structuring and professionalisation of national volunteer ecosystems in Africa. The result of collaborative work between twelve DENVA programme partner countries, it proposes a harmonised methodology while respecting the specificities of each national context.

The framework makes four major contributions to national volunteering schemes. Conceptually, it establishes a set of shared definitions that enable all stakeholders to speak a common language, facilitating dialogue and strengthening the coherence of interventions. Methodologically, it provides a structured process in four stages and fifteen operational phases, guiding practitioners from the identification of needs to the formalisation of contracts, reducing the risks of improvisation and improving the quality of missions. Organisationally, it clarifies the distribution of responsibilities among actors in the ecosystem through stakeholder mapping and a responsibility matrix, promoting coordination and limiting areas of confusion. Strategically, it positions volunteering as a lever for development aligned with national priorities and the SDGs, strengthening its institutional legitimacy and its impact on human development, social cohesion and youth employability.

The effective implementation of the framework

depends on several key success factors. Strong institutional leadership requires clear political support, commitment from agency management and support from supervisory authorities. Sufficient technical capacity requires teams that are trained and equipped for each phase of the process. Multi-stakeholder coordination requires mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and consultation, a culture of collaboration and procedures for resolving difficulties. Sufficient and sustainable resources require means commensurate with ambitions and diversification of funding sources. An effective information system requires management and monitoring tools adapted to operational needs. An institutionalised culture of quality requires a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement at all levels.

The DENVA programme has a transformative ambition: to contribute to the emergence of an African volunteering space where young people can freely engage across countries with mutual recognition of their skills. This vision is in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063. The first phase is an experimental laboratory, the lessons learned from which will guide a broader phase.

By using this framework, practitioners are contributing to the consolidation of a continental ecosystem where technical excellence is put at the service of sustainable human development.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editorial committee:

- DOYIGBE Colombe Judith Houevo / AnpE Benin
- NDONA Ntete Christiane / CNJV RDC
- OUATTARA Katolognan, / OSCN Ivory Coast
- DJINBE Isabelle / PNV Cameroun
- SOUMAH Alkaly / ANVJ Guinea
- DA SILVA Mutaro / Guinea-Bissau Youth Directorate
- ABDERRAHMANE Ahmed / PNV WATANOUNA Mauritania
- DEGUENONVO Georges Armand, Senegal
- KOULI Tchilabalo / ANVT Togo
- N'ZAMBA Flavien / CJV Congo
- BANGANI Nakordja / ANVT Togo
- RASSEMBEYE Telngar / France Volunteers Togo
- DOKU yawo Apelete / France Volunteers Ghana
- OFOSU-YEBOAH Edward / NYA Ghana

With the collaboration of:

- MOUTORE Yentougle, Lecturer at the University of Kara

Under the supervision (research, analysis and quality control) of:

- DEBRIS Thierry, Program manager, France Volunteers
- AGODE Edem, Director of Operations at ANVT
- ALI Edjarè, DENVA Program Coordinator/ France Volunteers


Graphic design / Photo credit / Illustrations : SEMAPHORE

February 2026

