

# AMEA Annual Learning Event 2024



Veggies 4 Planet  
& People



World Vegetable Center

Approaches, successes and challenges of vegetable  
business networks

Augustine Wafula

World Vegetable Center



# Veggies For Planet and People Brief



Duration: **5 years**, Donors: **IKEA Foundation**

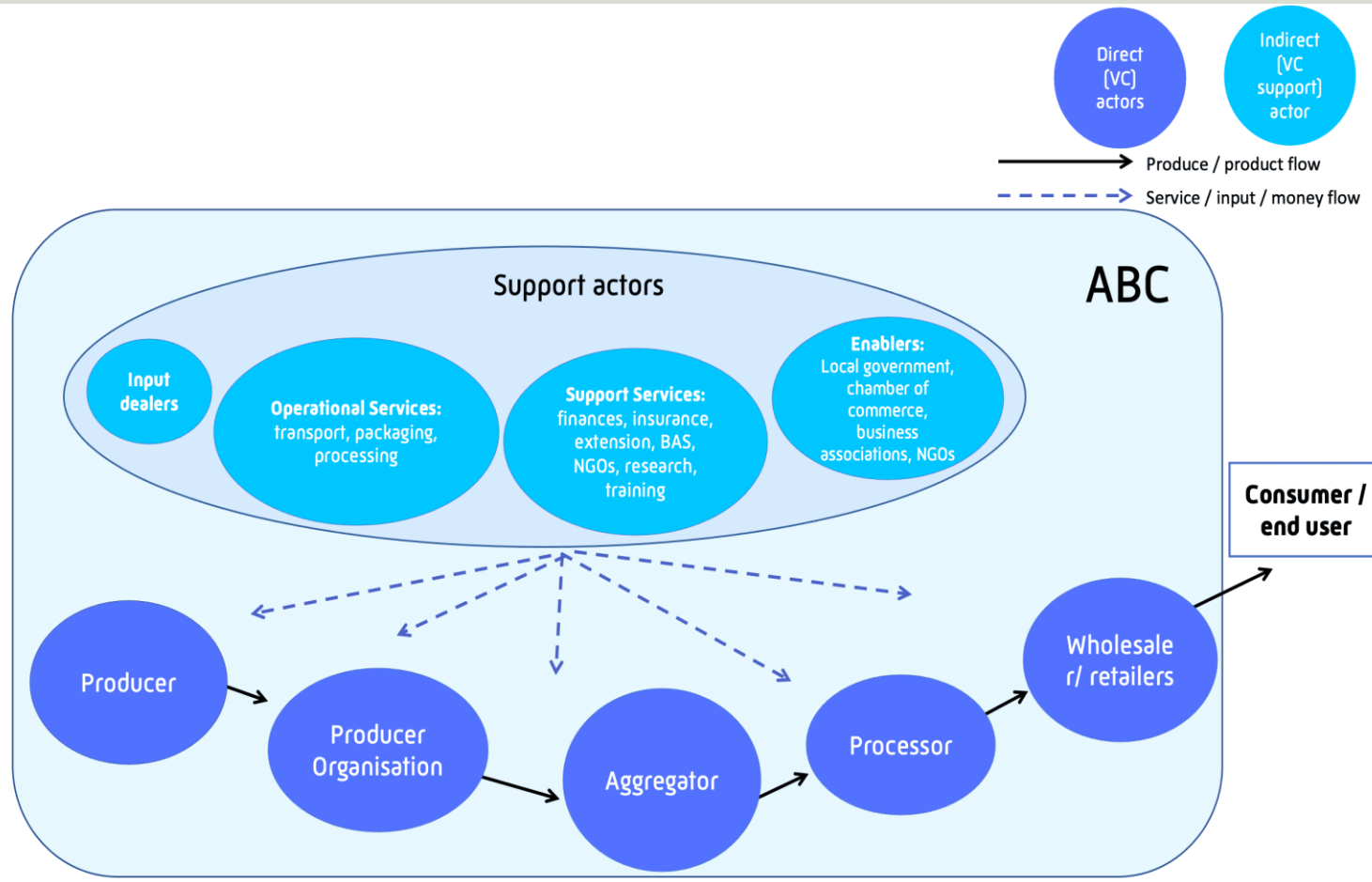
Countries: **Kenya, Ethiopia**

Full project title: Enabling Vegetable Business Development in East Africa for more jobs and better human and environmental health

## Specific objectives

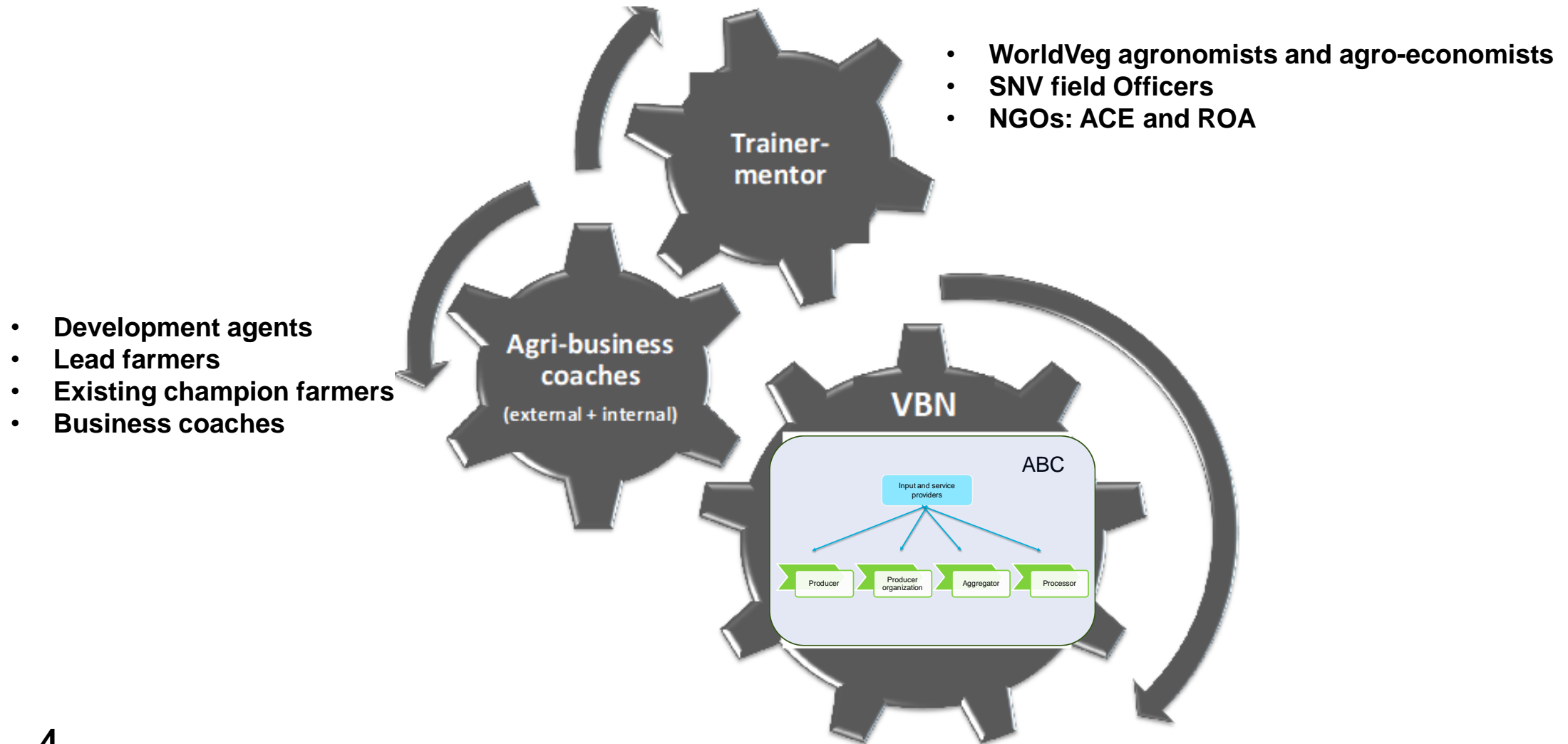
- Producers will make the transition to **regenerative agriculture**; at least five regenerative practices to be applied on **0.15 ha per producer, in total 600 ha**.
- The project aims to establish **200 vegetable business networks** (VBN) to engage an estimated **4000 women and youth** in market activities.
- Additional **10,000 producers** adopt regenerative practices **and 20,000 use improved seed**
- Value chain development will **emphasize traditional African vegetables**.
- Total value of **vegetables sold** by producers participating in the VBNs will be **9,240,000 USD/ year**.
- The **private seed sector will be strengthened** in both countries.
- **Consumption of vegetables** will be promoted through stakeholders.
- Lessons from VBNs to enhance **uptake of policy and regulatory recommendations**.
- **4000 jobs** will be created for women or youth participating in VBNs.

# The ICRA Agribusiness Cluster model



- Role of advisors from Farmer **technical and agronomic advisors to facilitators and on-the-job coaches of business networks** formed as partnerships around a producer organization; or what we call ‘Agri-Business Clusters’ (ABCs).
- The coaches link actors to each other in the ABC

# Common facilitation aspects of ABC and vegetable business networks (VBNs)



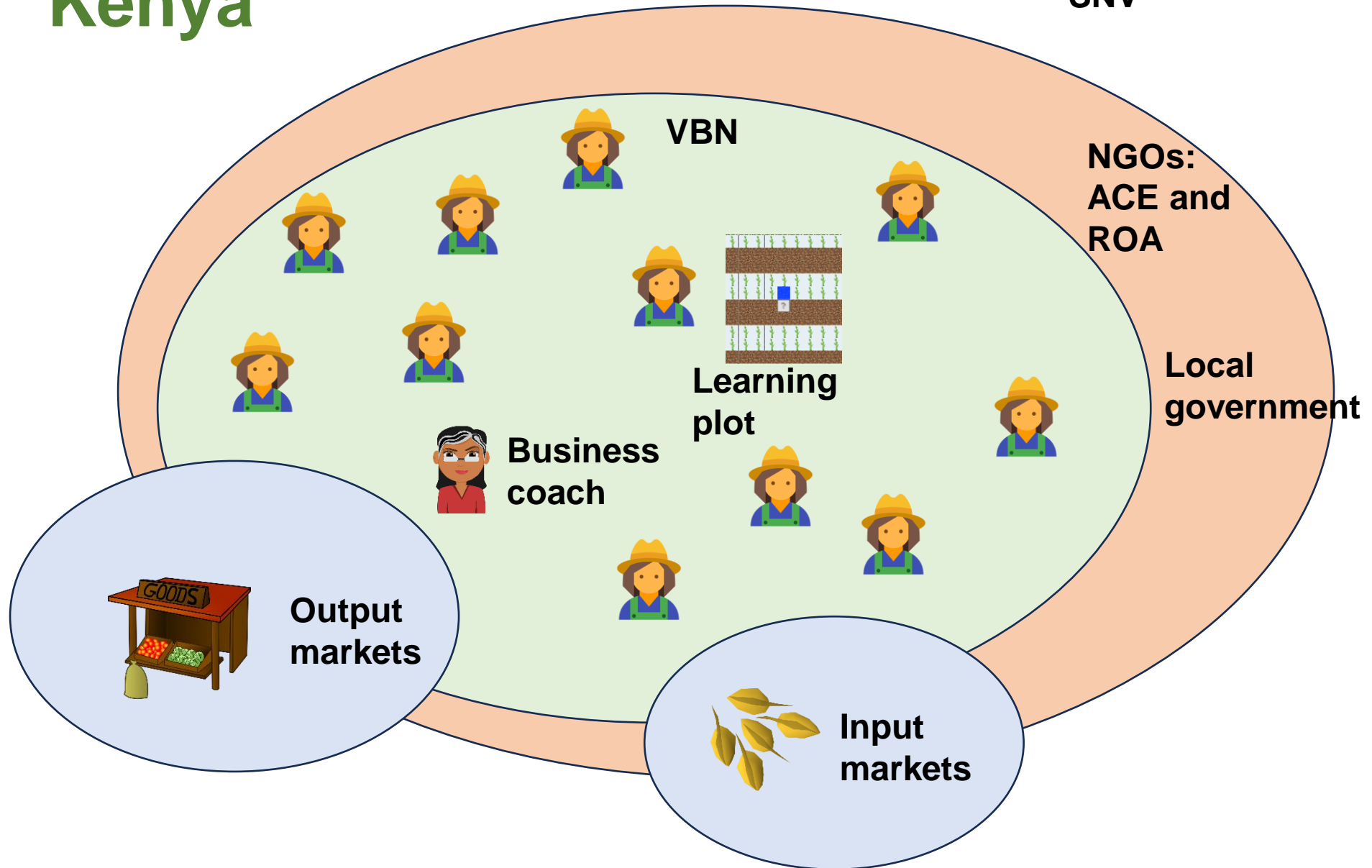
## Vegetable business networks (VBNs)

### Definition in V4P&P proposal:

‘VBNs are **groups of people that are formed around an existing vegetable business champion** who engage in collective action to access information, training, financial- or other services, input- or output markets, or enter into a vegetable business together’

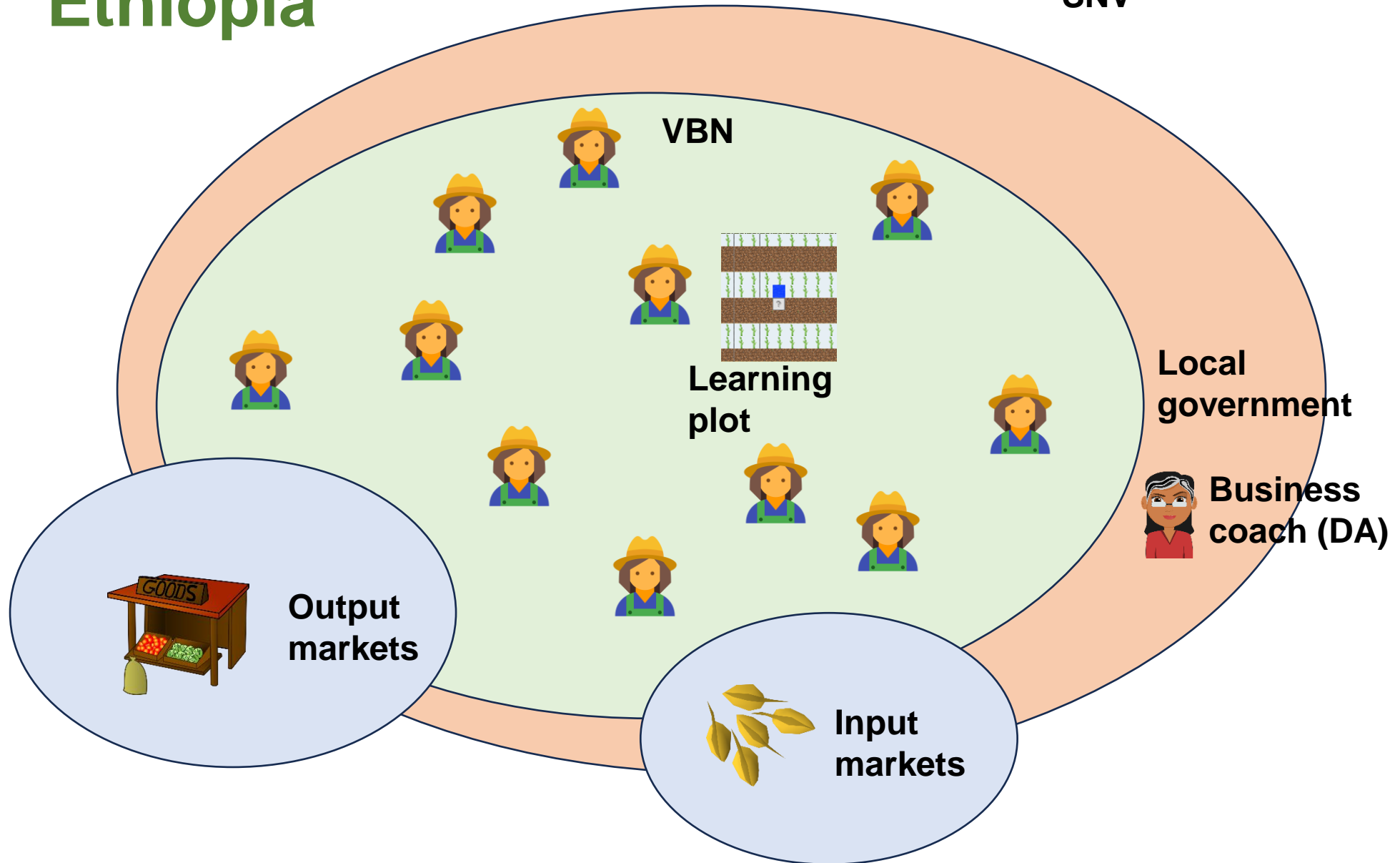
# VBN model Kenya

WorldVeg  
SNV



# VBN model Ethiopia

WorldVeg  
SNV



# Sustainability models of VBNs



- The project increasingly focuses on **mentoring, monitoring and evaluation**, while reducing the direct training activities
- **Handing over** after 5 years:
  - **In Kenya, VBNs will be handed over to business coaches** who are also members of the community
  - **In Ethiopia, handing over VBNs to the local government** as opposed to the Development Agents is considered more effective, because there are multiple officers at the Woreda with that mandate
- In addition, there are **other forces driving the VBNs** such as markets, profits, or non-profit related interests such as the agenda of regenerative agriculture.
- The road to sustainability can therefore not be reduced to one silver bullet, but is more likely a **combination of approaches**, influenced by the nature, drive and opportunities of each VBN.



## Successes of Vegetable Business networks

- VBNs are **platforms** for learning, networking and growing. Farmer field schools facilitated learning on RA and vegetable production. Networks were formed between equipment and input service providers as well as financial service providers. Government partners also used VBNs as platforms to reach value chain actors
- Building of **trust** within VBN actors has enabled their vegetable businesses to grow. Aggregation of produce among VBNs has led to economies of scale in marketing.
- VBNs have formed **VSLAs**, saved and invested in communal assets like water pumps, seeds, POS systems, land etc.
- The **transition to regenerative agriculture** for people and planet has gone beyond the project to the VBNs being champions of RA. They are aware of the impact of the unsustainable practices and are making a conscience choice to transition for the sake of their health and restoring degraded farmlands
- Creation of **decent jobs** by VBNs members has been a success.
- **More formalised relationships** between different value chain actors as relationships are formed and natured. The model has promoted backward and forward linkages
- VBNs have found innovative ways to differentiate their vegetables from the conventionally grown ones and make a slight premium. **Marketing their vegetables as safe** has led to preferential sourcing within market stalls and at farm gate

## Challenges encountered within VBNs

- Since VBNs is a new concept, issues of **trust** are yet to be fully strengthened and group dynamics play a key role in preventing VBNs in collective production and marketing
- As VBNs transition into RA, they are demanding for differentiated process and markets for their products. However, the market is yet to appreciate the **difference between RA grown and conventional vegetables**.
- There has been varied commitment with some VBN actors in the project leading to some members **dropping off**. This has been partly due to normal changes in life but also due to undue expectations from the project
- **Financial access** is limiting VBNs transition to RA technologies. Assets like solar water pumps, biodigesters, solar dryers research and development for inputs, licencing etc, require significant investment by the VBN actors which limits scaling of their enterprises.

**Thank you**

