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"Poachers and Poverty: Assessing Objective and Subjective Measures of Poverty among Illegal Hunters Outside Ruaha National Park, Tanzania"

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Illegal hunters in Africa may be making rational decisions about the hunting activities they partake in. These decisions could be linked to their socioeconomic status and the livelihood opportunities available to them. In particular, poverty is widely considered the leading driver that causes a household's inhabitants to take up poaching in protected areas. Programs aiming to protect vulnerable wildlife populations by mitigating poaching have historically relied upon income-based poverty metrics in efforts to reduce regional poverty and incentivise local inhabitants to discontinue poaching activities. Because such data sets that deal with poachers directly are rare, assumptions about the role of poverty, and the extent of poverty, that drives poaching have been hard to test. This study uses a unique sample of 173 self-admitted poachers living in villages adjacent to Ruaha National Park in Tanzania to explore the influence of poverty on poaching. Results indicated high demographic and household economy heterogeneity among poaching households. Capability deprivation examined more subjective measures of poverty and revealed that poachers are strongly motivated by the need to improve their incomes, but are not necessarily the poorest of the poor. (Text from authors' abstract)

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