

Strengthening Legal Responses to Wildlife Crimes in Tanzania: Comprehensive Insights from Uganda

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100601347>

Received: 02 July 2026; Accepted: 08 July 2026; Published: 18 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Wildlife crimes remain a profound threat to biodiversity, ecological stability, and rule of law across East Africa. Despite Tanzanian comprehensive statutory framework anchored in the *Wildlife Conservation Act [Cap.283, R.E.2023]*, the *Economic and Organized Crime Control Act [Cap.200, R.E.2023]*, persistent enforcement lacunae, fragmented institutional powers, and weak prosecutorial coordination continue to limit the effectiveness of her legal responses. This paper uses the doctrinal and comparative legal methodologies through examining primary statutes, precedents, policy documents, and scholarly commentaries to assess the adequacy of Tanzanian regime. By drawing comprehensive insights from Uganda, especially the reforms introduced through her specialized Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court (SUWC), the paper interrogates how judicial specialization, harmonized enforcement regimes, and clarity of prosecutorial roles strengthen wildlife offences' adjudication. The paper contributes to legal scholarship by recommending a reform agenda that aligns Tanzanian wildlife governance with international obligations and contemporary theories of deterrence as well as environmental justice.

Keywords: Wildlife Crime, Tanzania, Uganda, comparative law, environmental justice, deterrence theory

INTRODUCTION

Wildlife offence has evolved into a sophisticated form of environmental and economic criminalities which undermine conservation struggles and destabilize governance systems in East Africa (Ussain et al., 2022). Despite her global renown for rich wildlife heritage and a comprehensive statutory framework regulating conservation and wildlife utilization, Tanzania continues to grapple with escalating incidents of poaching, trafficking as well as unlawful possession of wildlife trophies (Utamwa, 2020). Moreover, persistent structural and procedural weaknesses undermine the potential of the legal regime to function as an effective deterrent (Paklioy and Sopacua, 2023). However, this challenge is particularly troubling given the nation's international obligations under the CITES, the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as regional cooperative enforcement regimes (Sina, 2024).

The central aim of this paper is to examine the adequacy and effectiveness of Tanzanian legal and institutional responses to wildlife offences through a doctrinal and comparative analysis. That is, the paper adopts a purely doctrinal methodology by relying on legislations, precedents, policy documents as well as writings of prominent jurists while using a comparative lens to draw insights from the Ugandan legal and institutional regimes, especially the institutional reforms embodied in the Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court (SUWC) (Oluwadayisi and Mimiko, 2017). Indeed, this comparative orientation helps to examine how judicial specialization, institutional harmonization as well as streamlined procedures contribute to improved enforcement and adjudication outcomes in the country (Griffiths, 1986).

The paper is crafted in seven parts. Following this introduction as the first part, the second part presents a thematic literature review integrated with the theoretical framework. The third part examines the international, regional as well as sub-regional normative landscapes on wildlife related crimes. The fourth part analyses the

national regimes of Tanzania and Uganda. The fifth part provides a comparative assessment of the two regimes, and the sixth part synthesizes the findings into a reform agenda. The seventh part concludes the paper with policy and legal recommendations for enhancing effective Tanzanian wildlife crimes response.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholarly engagement with wildlife related crimes in Africa shows that the issue is increasingly conceptualized not merely as a conservation concern but as a complex legal, economic as well as governance challenge molded by institutional structure and normative commitments (Thomas, 2022). However, the earlier conservation-oriented literature focused much on species depletion, biodiversity loss and ecological risk as well. Despite valuable for establishing the scale of environmental harm, such works tended to under-analyze the legal processes and institutional configurations that determine wildlife crimes enforcement effectiveness (Jafari, 2018). Thus, this descriptive ecological scholarship offers significant context but provides limited insight into the doctrinal and procedural factors that mediate wildlife crime responses in the country.

Moreover, a second scholarly strand situates wildlife trafficking within the broader structure of trans-national organized offence (Boniphace, 2022). Thus, these studies highlight the penetration of criminal syndicates, their financial sophistication as well as the increasing militarization of poaching activities. While the literature underscores the urgency of effective legal responses and institutional coordination, it normally assumes that existing legal regimes are adequate and instead focuses on operational enforcement challenges. Hence, such assumptions overlook structural weaknesses within domestic legal systems that impede effective enforcement even when the wildlife crime enforcing agencies possess the will to act (Mniwasa, 2022; Chakraborty and Nadeem, 2025).

Additionally, a third and more relevant body of literature examines governance, institutional fragmentation, prosecutorial inefficiencies as well as judicial limitations that affect wildlife crime enforcement in East African countries. This scholarship recognizes that wildlife crime cannot be addressed solely through punitive legislations; rather, it requires legal systems capable of delivering expeditiously, consistent and predictable justice (Gehl and Darrly, 2018). That is, scholars provide that where institutional powers overlap or conflict such as between wildlife agencies, police officers, prosecution services and environmental authorities, enforcement becomes inconsistent that contributes to low conviction rates and weak deterrent consequences. However, whilst these studies rightly diagnose fragmentation as a major challenge, they rarely undertake a structured doctrinal comparison of how institutional regime differs across jurisdictions and how such differences mold enforcement outcomes (Welch, 2023).

The scholarship, therefore, presents a clear gap that there is limited comparative doctrinal analysis linking municipal legal framework to enforcement performance within East Africa, and even fewer studies connect these legal regimes to theoretical frameworks such as environmental justice and deterrence theories (Oluwadayisi and Mimiko, 2017). This paper addresses these gaps by providing an analytically rigorous theory-driven comparison of the Tanzanian and Ugandan regimes while using their divergent institutional structures as a basis for understanding how legal effectiveness is constructed (Aberle, 2014). And to frame this inquiry, the paper adopts environmental justice theory and deterrence theory which conjointly illuminate both normative and functional dimensions of wildlife related crime regulation (Adeninyi, et al., 2016).

Environmental Justice Theory

This theory provides a normative lens through which to interpret the broader effects of wildlife offence and its governance (Sina, 2024). The theory insists fairness, equity as well as the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. However, in the context of wildlife offence, environmental justice shows how ineffective enforcement disproportionately harms rural and indigenous communities who depend on wildlife resources for their livelihoods, cultural heritage and ecological stability. Thus, when legal systems fail to provide effective deterrence or are undermined by procedural inefficiencies, environmental burdens shift to vulnerable groups via increased human-wildlife conflict, loss of ecosystem services, reduced tourism income and diminished community access to natural resources (Griffiths, 1986).

From a doctrinal perspective, environmental justice theory also interrogates the legitimacy of legal processes in any community. Wildlife enforcement institutions perceived as slow, fragmented or inconsistent erode public trust in conservation law, undermine local cooperation with agencies, and create conditions where communities may tolerate or even engage in illegal wildlife activities. The theory, thus, underscores that effective wildlife governance requires not only comprehensive statutes but also judicial and administrative regimes that are efficient, transparent and participatory (Mcfarlane and Rocha, 2021). The Ugandan specialized court can thus be interpreted as an institutional mechanism that enhances environmental justice by ensuring expeditiously adjudication, legal clarity and procedural fairness, whilst Tanzanian fragmented institutional model weakens public trust and dilutes the legitimacy of its conservation efforts.

Deterrence Theory

This theory provides a functional analytical structure for evaluating the effectiveness of wildlife crime enforcement (Utamwa, 2020). The theory asserts that criminals are deterred not primarily by the severity of penalties, but by the certainty and swiftness of sanction (Javaid and Arshed, 2022). In Tanzania, despite wildlife crimes carry some of the most severe penalties in East Africa, including mandatory minimum sentences and heavy fines, the persistence of poaching and trafficking shows that deterrence remains weak (Boniphace, 2022). Thus, this weakness stems from institutional fragmentation, slow case resolution, inconsistent prosecutorial strategies and procedural hindrances under the Act¹. Therefore, these systemic inefficiencies reduce the perceived likelihood of apprehension, prosecution and conviction; thus, weakening the deterrent impact of the law (Tarimo, 2016).

Ugandan regime aligns more closely with deterrence principles. The establishment of the Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court (SUWC) improves the certainty as well as predictability of adjudication by concentrating expertise, expediting case management and generating consistent sentencing patterns in the country.² Thus, a specialized court enhances the quality of judicial wisdom and reduces procedural delays that otherwise diminish the deterrent consequences of punitive statutes. so deterrence theory provides a valuable lens for comparing the two regimes while allowing the analysis to move beyond statutory content toward institutional performance (Bamwire, 2019)

On synthesis of theory with the comparative inquiry; environmental justice and deterrence theory intersect to reveal a central insight that legal effectiveness depends on institutional coherence as well as procedural functionality, and not merely statutory robustness³. Thus, a system that imposes severe punishments but processes cases slowly and/or inconsistently, it fails to deter criminal offenders and undermines community confidence (Schlosberg, 2007). Conversely, a regime that integrates institutional powers and ensures specialized judicial oversight enhances both deterrence and environmental justice. However, these theoretical points of views form the analytical backbone of this paper helping a deeper evaluation of Tanzanian and Ugandan legal regimes.

Normative Frameworks

The international and regional normative regimes governing wildlife related crimes establishes the external legal framework within which Tanzania and Uganda operationalize their national conservation regimes. These legal instruments do not only articulate aspirational principles but also, they impose binding obligations that shape how countries should design laws, configure institutions and conduct enforcement (Schlosberg, 2007). However, this framework reveals that the effectiveness of domestic wildlife crime regulation depends not simply on adopting these conventions but on internalizing their procedural, administrative and judicial expectations into coherent national regimes. Despite both Tanzania and Uganda having domesticated the core conservation treaties and are formally compliant at the legislative level, yet the divergent institutional outcomes in each jurisdiction show that treaty compliance should be interpreted via an institutional rather than textual lens (Mcfarlane and Rocha, 2021).

¹ Economic and Organized Crime Control Act [Cap.200, R.E.2023]

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), 1973: establishes the major global regulatory framework monitoring and restricting trade in endangered species (Sina, 2024). Its obligations require member states to establish designated management authorities, implement permit systems, control transit and export routes as well as criminalize illegal trade. Despite the CITES⁴ is framed as a trade-regulation legal instrument, its doctrinal significance lies in the procedural discipline it demands from municipal enforcement bodies. Effective enforcement presupposes a stable chain of custody, specialized investigation mechanisms, forensic capacity as well as concentrated administrative authority capable of issuing permits and coordinating implementation actions (Cozens et al. 2018).

Tanzanian diffused institutional regimes that divide responsibilities among Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA), Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA), Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), National Prosecutions Services (NPS), and Customs, introduced doctrinal uncertainty and weakens compliance due to fragmentation which disrupts the continuity of administrative control and increases chances for procedural failures (Griffiths, 1986). On the other hand, the Ugandan more centralized model under the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) coupled with a specialized judicial system, internalizes the procedural coherences that CITES anticipate, and enabling clearer evidence trails and more predictable enforcement results.⁵

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992: expands the normative terrain beyond trade regulation by imposing commitments related to biodiversity protection, sustainable use as well as equitable benefits-sharing (Schlosberg, 2007). The CBD's obligations are inherently governance oriented as require signatory states to develop legal regimes that balance conservation imperatives with community rights, resource access and equitable distribution of environmental benefits. From an environmental justice view, the Treaty⁶ compliance demands legal institutions capable of ensuring that enforcement does not reproduce inequities or marginalization (Jafari, 2018).

Despite Tanzania having domestically operationalized CBD's principles through statutory commitments to conservation and community-based natural resources management, institutional fragmentation undermines these commitments of the country (WWF, 2021). Whilst enforcement is slow or inconsistent, local communities bear disproportionate burdens from human-wildlife conflict, lose tourism income and disrupted ecological services. The Ugandan integrated institutional approach supports the CBD's governance objectives through reducing procedural delays, enhancing judicial accessibility and providing clearer remedies via specialized adjudication (WWF, 2021).

The Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, 1994: provides the primary regional regime for trans-boundary enforcement cooperation (Utamwa, 2020). The Agreement creates legal obligations to share intelligence, coordinate investigations as well as support trans-boundary operations targeting organized wildlife trafficking syndicates. For member states to fulfill these commitments, municipal enforcement institutions must operate cohesively and maintain reliable investigative and prosecutorial channels (Cozens et al., 2018)

The Tanzanian internal fragmentation weakens its ability to meet these cooperative obligations at large. While responsibility for investigation, administrative authorization as well as prosecution is scattered among multiple bodies with unclear hierarchical relationships, coordinated responses become bureaucratically complex (Kanini, 2021). However, Ugandan model by contrast, aligns more cleanly with the Lusaka Agreement's expectations due to the fact UWA serves as the central enforcement and intelligence body which facilitates immediate cooperation with regional counterparts (Brandl, 2002).

The East African Community Protocol on Environment and Natural Resources Management, 2005: introduces a harmonization imperative by requiring signatory states to align their environmental laws, enforcement standards and procedural regimes (Sina, 2024). The Protocol relies on a presupposition of institutional compatibility among the partner states. Thus, doctrinal alignment is not achieved merely through adopting similar statutory provisions but by ensuring that municipal institutions can operationalize comparable

⁴The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), 1973.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992

procedures, evidence standards as well as judicial timelines. Moreover, the Protocol implicitly favors systems with integrated enforcement pathways and coordinated prosecutorial as well as judicial functions. However, Ugandan specialized wildlife court enhances such harmonization by producing consistent jurisprudence and predictable case outcomes contrary to Tanzanian dispersed institutional regimes that complicate regional interoperability (Sina, 2024).

However, a deeper doctrinal insight emerges when these legal instruments are examined through the lens of dualism which is applicable to both Tanzania and Uganda (Utamwa, 2020). As dualist states, international treaties do not acquire direct municipal legal force upon ratification rather they require legislative incorporation. Thus, this means that treaty compliance depends almost entirely on the quality of domestic enforcement mechanisms rather than the act of ratification itself. Tanzanian statutory regime shows high levels of formal incorporation such as the CITES Schedules are domesticated *via* Regulations, penalties reflect treaty expectations as well as administrative bodies exist in law (Utamwa, 2020).

Despite this Tanzanian statutory comprehensiveness, yet institutional fragmentation and procedural inefficiency impede substantive compliance. Ugandan regime illustrates the opposite to Tanzanian regime. This is because despite the relatively similar statutory content, but significantly effective institutional coherence and procedural execution in Uganda (Utamwa, 2020). Thus, this underscores a critical doctrinal conclusion that the international normative regime does not dictate institutional form, but its effective enforcement depends on institutional coherence, centralized authority as well as judicial specialization.

Furthermore, the treaties collectively impose a normative expectation of predictable, timely and evidence-driven adjudication, a requirement directly connected to deterrence theory (WWF, 2021). Enforcement systems that cannot process cases swiftly or maintain evidentiary integrity diminish the deterrent value of treated-based punishments. However, Tanzanian reliance on the Economic and Organised Crime Control Act, 2023 (EOCCA)⁷ with its extended pre-trial procedures and heavy evidentiary burdens is inconsistent with these normative expectations. In contrast, Ugandan specialized court enhances treaty compliance by enabling efficient case progression, stable evidentiary standards and consistent sentencing in the country⁸.

However, whilst these treaties are read together, they reveal a unified normative demand that member states should establish legal and institutional regimes that integrate administrative, investigative, prosecutorial as well as judicial functions in a manner that ensures predictability, coherence and transparency. Thus, this requirement aligns more naturally with Ugandan integrated approach than the Tanzanian fragmented regime. The normative system therefore provides a doctrinal foundation for evaluating municipal legal regimes in the next section and supports the argument that institutional structure; not statutory severity, is the primary determinant of compliance and enforcement (WWF, 2021).

Legal Frameworks in Tanzania and Uganda

Both Tanzania and Uganda possess comprehensive statutory obligations to wildlife conservation after incorporating international commitments into municipal law and recognize wildlife protection as a domestic priority. However, the functional effectiveness of these regimes diverges sharply due to differences in institutional framework, prosecutorial pathways, judicial system and internal coherence. That is, a doctrinal analysis shows that Tanzanian regime is normatively robust but structurally incoherent, whilst Ugandan regime is institutionally integrated and procedurally aligned with deterrence-based enforcement mechanism (Cozens et al. 2018). However, the contrast between Tanzania and Uganda becomes most apparent when their domestic legal and institutional regimes are examined doctrinally rather than descriptively.

Legal Frameworks in Tanzania

Tanzanian wildlife governance framework is anchored in the Wildlife Conservation Act⁹ while supplemented by the National Parks Act¹⁰, the Economic and Organized Crime Control Act¹¹, and several subsidiary

⁷ The Economic and Organized Crime Control Act [Cap.200, R.E.2023].

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ [Cap.283, R.E.2023]

¹⁰ [Cap.282, R.E.2023]

¹¹ [Cap.200, R.E.2023]

legislations governing protected areas, game licensing and anti-poaching measures (Gehl and Darryl, 2018). However, on paper based, this regime is among the most punitive in East African region. The Act¹² prescribes stringent minimum mandatory sentences for poaching, trafficking and illegal possession of government trophies crimes; as the Act¹³ criminalizes preparatory acts, and provides wider powers to wildlife officers. Moreover, Tanzania has also incorporated CITES Schedules through detailed regulations; thus reflecting high level of statutory compliance with international commitments.

However, legal effectiveness is undermined not by legislative weakness rather by institutional fragmentation and misaligned enforcement pathways in the country (Sina, 2024). This is because enforcement responsibilities are scattered across multiple institutions, including the TAWA, TANAPA, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), MNRT, NPS, the Police Force Tanzania (PT), the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) in corruption related crimes as well as Customs Authorities at borders (Mcfarlane and Rocha, 2021). Thus, these wildlife related crimes institutions exercise overlapping powers without a clearly harmonized chain of command. The resulting dispersion produces uncertainty in investigative obligation, inconsistent enforcement standards as well as duplication of operational functions.

Illustrating power overlaps, for instance, TAWA and TANAPA both function as wildlife law enforcement agencies but operate under separate statutory frameworks, thus leading to differing investigative tactics, evidence-handling procedures as well as administrative reporting structures (Griffiths, 1986). This is a recurring cause of evidentiary breakdowns, especially in chain of custody management for ivory, firearms and trophy related exhibits. Therefore, from a deterrence theory point of view, this institutional fragmentation reduces the certainty of prosecution by increasing the likelihood of procedural error, lost evidence, and contradictory testimonies as well (Daniel, 2016).

Moreover, the second structural flaw in Tanzania lies in the reliance on the EOCCA¹⁴ for prosecuting wildlife offences. Whilst the EOCCA was designed to handle serious economic offences, its procedurally regime, extended pre-trial detentions, intricate evidentiary thresholds, broad prosecutorial discretion as well as non-bailable offences, renders it procedurally complex for wildlife crimes (Roz, 2017). Wildlife cases normally languish in prolonged pre-trial stages due to the EOCCA's requirement for certificate of conferring jurisdictions to subordinate courts, lengthy committal process and delayed transmission of case files between investigating and prosecutorial agencies. Thus, these delays erode the swiftness of penalty, a core requirement of Deterrence theory, and undermine public trust in the system, hence weakening environmental justice objectives relating to access to expeditiously remedies and fair process (Kebell and Davies, 2006).

Additionally, the absence of judicial specialization in Tanzania diffuses adjudicative expertise. Wildlife criminal cases are handled within the general criminal justice system normally by magistrates and judges who lack training in wildlife forensics, ecosystem evaluation, CITES Schedules, or the cumbersome evidentiary dimensions of trafficking networks (Roz, 2017). Courts of law have been seen in several instances misinterpreting trophy evaluation regulations or apply inconsistent sentencing. Thus, without specialization, jurisprudence in Tanzania remains underdeveloped, sentencing inconsistencies persist as well as trial outcomes become unpredictable; the conditions which are antithetical to deterrence.

Another wildlife crime adjudication weakness in Tanzania arises from lack of prosecutorial coherence in the country (Roz, 2017). The NPS is the primary prosecutorial agency, yet wildlife agencies frequently initiate preliminary investigations and arrests without synchronized coordination with public prosecutors. This disconnect normally results in poorly framed charges, defective drafting of charge sheets as well as premature arrests before evidence is adequately assessed. Thus, these prosecutorial misalignments cause case withdrawals, adjournments, and acquittals of criminals which weaken the deterrent force of even the effective statutes. Moreover, there is tension between TAWA, TANAPA, and Police officers regarding arrest powers, trophy storage, and information sharing which creates conditions where critical intelligence is withheld or delayed (Sina, 2024). Therefore, when institutions compete for operational control, the systemic coherence required for effective wildlife offence enforcement is lost.

¹² [Cap.283, R.E.2023]

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ The Economic and Organized Crime Control Act [Cap.200, R.E.2023]

Legal Frameworks in Uganda

Ugandan domestic regime for combating wildlife offences exhibits a level of institutional coherence and procedural alignment that stands in sharp contrast to Tanzanian fragmented institutional system. The Ugandan approach is not grounded in more detailed or punitive statute, but in a deliberate institutional philosophy that organizes enforcement around unity of authority, coordinated prosecutorial pathways as well as judicial specialization (Sina, 2024). The Uganda Wildlife Act, 2019 consolidates administrative, investigative and enforcement obligations under UWA; thus, creating a centralized locus of accountability in the country.

This structural integration has implications such as eliminating the jurisdictional ambiguities and power conflicts that weaken multi-agency stems like Tanzanian agencies, and ensures that enforcement actions proceed through a single and coherent chain of command. Thus, by avoiding the dispersal of authority across multiple agencies, Uganda secures evidentiary continuity, administrative consistency and a level of operational predictability that aligns with deterrence requirement of certain and efficient wildlife crime enforcement (Van, 2022).

Moreover, rather than dispersing wildlife criminal cases across general courts, Uganda recognizes that wildlife offences constitute a specialized regulatory domain that requires distinct procedural handling, judicial expertise as well as interpretive consistency. The established specialized court; Standards, Utilities and Wildlife Court (SUWC), therefore, operates as a mechanism for ensuring that the legal process is aligned with the evidentiary complexity and ecological significance of wildlife crimes (Van, 2022). Its specialization allows magistrates and judges to cultivate expertise in CITES schedules, wildlife forensics, trophy evaluation as well as the evidentiary nuances of trafficking networks; thus generating jurisprudence that is coherent and technically informed as well (URT, 2022).

Additionally, this specialization advances deterrence by producing predictable judicial outcomes and reducing the variability that undermines criminals' perception of legal consequences. It also advances environmental justice by ensuring that wildlife crimes whose impacts proportionately affect local communities, are adjudicated swiftly and competently, and reinforcing procedural legitimacy in the eyes of affected communities (Van, 2024).

However, the collaboration between the UWA and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) begins at the investigative step by allowing prosecutors to guide evidence gathering and frame charges on the basis of complete and coherent intelligence. This alignment resolves the procedural deficiencies common in Tanzania like defective charge sheets, premature arrests as well as evidentiary inconsistencies (Mkami and Longopa, 221). The Ugandan integrated prosecutorial pathway is structurally aligned with the demands of wildlife offence enforcement, where delays or lacunae in early case preparation normally lead to acquittals of criminals. Thus, by ensuring that prosecution is built on a solid evidentiary foundation, Uganda increases the certainty of conviction; which is an essential condition for deterrence and enhances the fairness and openness required for environmental justice (Daniel, 2016).

However, the significance of Ugandan regime becomes, especially clear when contrasted with Tanzanian reliance on the Economic and Organized Crime Control Act (EOCCA)¹⁵. The EOCCA introduces procedural burdens in Tanzania that are not designed for wildlife offences; thus slowing enforcement and creating unpredictability in case progression. Uganda avoids this structural mismatch by designing wildlife institutions around the characteristics of the crime rather than forcing the crime into an unsuitable procedural system (Mcfarlane and Rocha, 2021). Thus, the SUWC represents a doctrinal fit between institutional structure and crime type. This is due to the fact that it embodies the principle that legal processes should be structurally calibrated to the nature of the offences they address, a principle which is absent in Tanzania as punitive legislations co-exist with procedural regimes that frustrate effective enforcement.

Comparatively, the divergence between the two national systems is fundamentally institutional and not legislative. That is, both states have formally domesticated CITES and CBD commitments into their municipal laws, yet Uganda internalizes the procedural and institutional expectations of these Treaties whilst Tanzania limits its compliance largely to statutory domestication (Daniel, 2016). The Ugandan centralized administrative

¹⁵ [Cap.200, R.E.2023]

authority, coordinated prosecutorial process as well as specialized judiciary embody the multi-layered governance model that international wildlife legal instruments implicitly require. The system is, thus, able to satisfy both deterrence-oriented demands of predictable enforcement and environmental justice command of accessible and legitimate dispute resolution. However, despite having some of the region's most punitive wildlife penalties, Tanzanian regime fails to realize similar outcomes due to its institutions being structurally incapable of delivering certainty, consistency or procedural accessibility (Roz, 2017).

Generally, the Ugandan model shows that the effectiveness of wildlife related crimes regulation depends on the institutional structure rather than the severity of statutes (Boniphace, 2022). However, Tanzanian experience illustrates the limits of statutory maximalism in the absence of coherent administrative and judicial systems. Thus, Uganda translates legislative obligations into functional enforcement due to the fact that its institutions are designed to complement the substantive laws whereas Tanzanian fragmented institutions undermine its otherwise robust legislations. This reinforces the theoretical insight that deterrence and environmental justice are institutional successes and not merely legislative aspirations. Thus, the comparison confirms that strengthening wildlife crime enforcement in Tanzania requires effective structural reforms that align investigative, prosecutorial and judicial functions into a unified and coherent regime similar to Ugandan (Sina, 2024).

Comparative Findings

Despite both Tanzania and Uganda share similar legislative obligations in wildlife crime regimes, they diverge substantially in enforcement outcomes because of differences in institutional structure, prosecutorial pathways as well as judicial structure. The Ugandan wildlife crime system achieves greater coherence not because its legislation is inherently comprehensive, but because its institutions and procedures are more logically aligned with the functional demands of wildlife offence enforcement (Bamwire, 2019). Thus, this divergence confirms a central insight drawn from Deterrence theory and Environmental justice theory. This is because an effective wildlife crime regulation is not a product of punitive legislative language alone, rather of institutional regimes that secure the certainty, consistency and accessibility of law in practice.

Ugandan wildlife crime enforcement success is primarily attributable to its integrated institutional model. The UWA consolidates information sharing, investigations, evidence handling and administrative oversight within a single body; thus, ensuring continuity across enforcement stages (TRAFFIC, 2020). Hence, this institutional integration reduces the procedural vulnerabilities that arise when multiple authorities compete for jurisdiction or apply inconsistent wildlife crime enforcement standards. This continuity strengthens the evidentiary chain, improves coordination with public prosecutors as well as enhances the likelihood that cases progress smoothly from investigation to conviction (Sina, 2024).

Meanwhile, Tanzania disperses wildlife governance obligations across the TANAPA, NCAA, NPS, TAWA, MNRT, PCCB, and the PT. This dispersion creates bureaucratic silos and jurisdictional frictions that frequently interrupt evidence handling, obstructing coordinated investigations as well as weakening prosecutorial certainty. However, from a deterrence point of view, these structural discontinuities lower the perceived likelihood of apprehension and successful adjudication; thus diminishing the preventive consequence of Tanzanian otherwise stringent sanctions (Kaniki, 2021). Similarly, from the environmental justice point of view, fragmented institutions weaken community confidence by projecting an image of inconsistency and administrative confusion which discourages cooperation and undermines the legitimacy of conservation laws.

Moreover, a second critical distinction lies in judicial structure. The establishment of the SUWC in Uganda represents a coherent response to the specialized nature of wildlife offences. The specialized court established (SUWC) centralizes expertise which accelerates case management and produces consistent sentencing patterns in the country (TRAFFIC, 2020). Thus, judicial specialization enhances predictability which refines jurisprudence and promotes informed interpretation of technical evidence like trophy evaluation, species schedules as well as forensic assessments.

However, this predictability is vital for deterrence as criminals are more likely to be deterred when legal implications of their actions are clear, consistent and swiftly applied thereof¹⁶. Conversely, Tanzanian generalist

¹⁶ Ibid

judicial structure disperses wildlife cases across courts of law whose magistrates and judges normally lack specialized training in wildlife and environmental jurisprudence. Thus, this generalist system leads to inconsistent sentencing, misinterpretation of regulations and procedural delays that finally weaken both the swiftness and certainty of punishment (Utamwa, 2020). In this sense, Tanzanian judicial system renders its legislative regime incompetent as the law exists in robust form but lacks the institutional environment necessary for effective enforcement.

The prosecutorial pathway also distinguishes the two national wildlife systems. That is, in Uganda, coordination between the office of the DPP and UWA commences at the earliest stages of investigations (Bamwire, 2019). Public prosecutors and investigators in Uganda conjointly assess evidence, structure charges and plan case theory which ensures that wildlife cases are filed in courts with coherent evidentiary foundations. Thus, this procedural alignment significantly reduces errors like filing defective charge sheets, premature arresting and evidentiary loopholes, problems that frequently affect wildlife crime prosecutions in Tanzania (Sina, 2024).

There are several shown instances where Tanzanian public prosecutors receive incomplete, contradictory or poorly structured case files from the wildlife agencies which results in prosecutorial withdrawals, frequent adjournment of cases, and/or outright acquittals of criminals. However, Tanzanian reliance on the EOCCA¹⁷ aggravates these deficiencies by subjecting wildlife crimes to procedural burdens designed for serious and complex economic crimes such as extended committal processes and mandatory certificate conferring jurisdiction to subordinate courts. Hence, these legal requirements unnecessarily delay case progression, affect deterrence and erode trust in environmental justice by denying local communities expeditiously and effective remedies.

Additionally, the most substantial divergence emerges from the relationship between EOCCA in Tanzania and SUWC in the side of Uganda. The EOCCA's procedural regime conceived for grand corruption and financial offences imposes a structural mismatch when applied to wildlife crimes (Brabdl, 2002). Thus, its rigid bail restrictions, prolonged pre-trial procedures and complex evidentiary requirements make it an ill-fitting mechanism for fast-moving wildlife related crime investigations that depend on swiftness and continuity.

However, by contrast, the Ugandan SUWC is structurally aligned to the needs of wildlife offence prosecution. The system focuses on expertise, speed, and consistency; thus, institutionalizing the major conditions required for effective deterrence. Ugandan structural fit between institutional framework and crime characteristics explains why even moderate statutory penalties can achieve effective deterrent effects whereas Tanzanian severe penalties fail to generate equivalently predictable results (Welch, 2023).

Moreover, international treaty compliance also reflects this divergence between the two national wildlife systems (Orlando, 2019). Both Tanzania and Uganda have domesticated obligations under CITES, CBD, and the Lusaka Agreement into municipal legislations, but only Uganda has internalized the procedural demands of these legal instruments. Centralized authority, specialized adjudication as well as coordinated prosecution assist Uganda to meet the operational expectations of international conservation frameworks like harmonized investigative processes, reliable chain of custody standards as well as predictable judicial remedies (Orlando, 2019). Tanzanian fragmented wildlife crime enforcement pathways and procedural inconsistencies limit its abilities to operationalize the treaties' requirements, even if its legislative enforcement is textually complete. Therefore, this confirms that international treaty compliance should be assessed not only in terms of statutory alignment but also institutional functionality (Sina, 2024).

Generally, Ugandan system shows that institutional coherence, prosecutorial coordination and judicial specialization generate effective deterrent effects and more equitable environmental outcomes than punitive statutory alone. Tanzanian experience demonstrates that legislative severity cannot compensate for fragmented wildlife crime enforcement institutions, misaligned procedures as well as generalist courts of law (Orlando, 2019). In essence, Uganda succeeds not because it has more statutes, but because it has better and coordinated institutions. Thus, Tanzania struggles not because its statutes are weak, but because its wildlife institutions are not structurally well equipped to enforce those laws into effective operation.

¹⁷ The Economic and Organized Crime Control Act [Cap.200, R.E.2023]

DISCUSSION AND REFORM AGENDA

The comparative analysis between Tanzania and Uganda shows that the major challenge in Tanzanian wildlife crime regime is not legislative deficiency but institutional incoherence arising from dispersed powers, procedural misalignment and the absence of judicial specialization as well. These deficiencies collectively undermine the core objectives embodied in deterrence and environmental justice. A discussion of the reform implications should therefore start by acknowledging that Tanzanian statutory regime; although severe, comprehensive and compliant with international commitments, remains incomplete without corresponding institutional reforms (Orlando, 2019). That is, the punitive laws alone cannot deter wildlife offences when the institutions tasked with enforcing related laws are fragmented, uncoordinated and procedurally inconsistent. Hence, effective reform should target the framework of enforcement rather than legislative text.

The most urgent crucial reform priority in Tanzania concerns institutional coordination. This is because Tanzanian distribution of enforcement mandates among the TANAPA, TAWA, NCAA, NPS, PCCB, MNRT, and the PT creates complexes administrative landscape in which overlapping powers dilute accountability and hinder coherent enforcement as well (Sina, 2023). The fragmented institutional structures hinder evidence continuity, delaying investigations, and generate conflicting interpretations of procedural obligations (Wambura, 2021)

Thus, reforms must aim at consolidating or rationalizing institutional functions so that wildlife crime enforcement proceeds along a unified and predictable chain of command. The insight here is that a coherent administrative structure enhances deterrence by increasing certainty of enforcement and strengthens environmental justice by projecting legitimacy and openness to affected local communities (Sina, 2023). Centralized structures similar to Ugandan UWA model would provide Tanzania with a regime, in which, information gathering, investigation, evidence handling, and prosecutorial coordination operate in an integrated way rather than through disjointed silos (Kaniki, 2019).

Moreover, equally critical is the need for reforms in the prosecutorial pathway. The ineffective coordination between the wildlife agencies and NPS in Tanzania is a recurring cause of weak case outcomes (Fontana and Pereira, 2022). Public prosecutors in Tanzania always receive incomplete or prematurely assembled case files; thus, rendering to charge defects, frequent case adjournments and eventual case withdrawals. Thus, this process diminishes the certainty and swiftness of punishment something that undermines the preventive logic that Tanzanian severe penalties are expected to achieve.

The reform agenda should include shift toward early-stage prosecutorial involvement where prosecutors collaborate with investigators from the first point of evidence gathering (Rachael, 2019). This model which Uganda has institutionalized, would increase prosecutorial precision, effective evidentiary coherence and reduce procedural defects. Hence, by securing effective prosecutorial foundations, Tanzania would enhance the credibility of her legal processes and align its enforcement regime more closely with the requirements of deterrence.

Additionally, the most transformative reform concerns the judicial system for wildlife crime adjudication in Tanzania. This is because Tanzanian reliance on the EOCCA. is misaligned with the nature of wildlife crimes. The EOCCA's procedural burdens designed for complicated economic offences slow the adjudication process of wildlife crimes and create unpredictability in case trajectories. Thus, these delays affect deterrence by diminishing the swiftness of punishment and undermine environmental justice by denying local communities expeditiously resolution of the harms caused by wildlife offences (Hussain et al., 2022).

The absence of judicial specialization in Tanzania compounds these challenges. That is, magistrates and judges without training in wildlife and environmental laws normally misinterpret valuation rules, mishandle wildlife forensic evidence, and/or impose inconsistent sentences against convicts. Thus, the obvious reform implication is the establishment of a specialized wildlife court in the country or dedicated wildlife divisions within existing courts of law (Mniwasa, 2022). Hence, such a forum would create a doctrinal environment in which judicial expertise is utilized; procedural inconsistency is institutionalized as well as a coherent body of jurisprudence can develop also (Mairo, 2021). However, the Ugandan approach shows that specialization is not merely an

administrative convenience but a necessity for ensuring that complicated regulatory crimes are adjudicated with technical competence and procedural efficiency.

Also, reform should address the broader question of international treaty internalization. Whilst Tanzania has incorporated CITES and CBD commitments through legislative instruments, reality underscores a significant enforcement loophole arising from institutional fragmentation and procedural inconsistencies (Mairo, 2021). Treaty compliance requires not only municipal translation of international commitments but the creation of competent institutional mechanisms capable of fulfilling those commitments in substance.

Multiplicity of structures and bureaucracies constituted a great challenge in wildlife prosecution and investigation in Tanzania. In Tanzania, there are different bodies with varying powers of investigating wildlife offences. The bodies include; Police Force of Tanzania (PT), Prevention and Combating Corruption Bureau (PCCB), Drug Control and Enforcement Authority (DCEAu), Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and National Prosecutions Service (NPS), which is the leading body of investigation. Since there are various bodies entrusted to deal with wildlife offences, this led to a monumental challenge in investigation of wildlife offences because of conflicting interests. To typify this submission, duplication of structures delayed investigation of wildlife offences, especially where one institution was not willing to allow investigation of wildlife offences premised on a predicate offence under its department to be investigated by another institution (Fontana and Pereira, 2012). These authors indicated that duplication of investigating structures poses difficulties in preventing wildlife offences. On multiplicity of structures, Mniwasa (2022) argues that since there are various statutes, which establish several wildlife offences each with its own mandates and functions are not adequately coordinated, this leads to unnecessary overlaps of mandates and functions among LEAs.

Mistrust among the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) was also observed to be a challenge facing investigation of wildlife offences in Tanzania. Trust among investigating institution is key for successful investigation of wildlife offences since it smoothenes the process of investigation through according assistance and information sharing among the institutions. Where there is mistrust among the investigating persons within the same institution or different institutions poses difficulties in achieving an effective investigation. There was mistrust among investigating officers not only from different LEAs but also even within the same institution. Akin to this, Fontana and Pereira (2022) claim that investigation of wildlife offences in Tanzania was faced with lack of trust among investigation machinery and even FIU faced mistrust when it sought information abroad. Sultan and Mohamed (2023) assert that mistrust in international cooperation leads to ineffective wildlife offences regimes.

Lack of cooperation among the LEAs was another challenge. The complexity and transnational nature of wildlife offences requires close inter-agency cooperation in conducting investigation of wildlife offences (Zafarullah and Haque, 2023). There are instances where wildlife offences investigation requires cooperation among key players of investigation. It has been revealed that where one institution is not willing to conduct investigation of wildlife offences premised on a predicate offence under its department to be investigated by another institution, there is a tendency of not cooperating with institution that carries out wildlife offences investigation. Where one LEA or any other institution does not readily cooperate in ensuring that the other institution is readily supplied with relevant information and assistance for easy gathering of evidence, leads to failure in achieving successful investigation (Anders, 2021).

Similar stance was observed by the ESAAMLG's (2021) report, which, while acknowledging the efforts and coordination exhibited by the LEAs in Tanzania, it asserts that there was no mechanism in place to facilitate coordination among the LEAs. The Report further indicates that there was no direct link between the LEAs and National Multi-Disciplinary Committee, which is responsible for formulating, assessing, and enhancing effectiveness of wildlife offences policies. This caused many wildlife offences culprits to benefit from the crimes for lack of sufficient evidence to link them with the commission of wildlife offences (Santoso et al., 2011).

However, Ugandan regime demonstrates that international environmental obligations become meaningful only if administrative, prosecutorial and judicial systems are aligned around a unified enforcement strategy. Thus, Tanzanian reform agenda should include institutional reconfiguration that ensures predictable evidence trails,

harmonized administrative procedures and effective coordination in cross-border cooperation which is crucial for combating wildlife trafficking networks that operate at regional level (Fontana and Pereira, 2022).

Furthermore, community participation forms another critical dimension of the reform agenda in Tanzania (Chemonges, 2018). Environmental justice theory insists that legal regimes must be legitimate and accessible to those who bear the environmental effects of related crimes. Tanzanian fragmented enforcement regime erodes public confidence as local communities perceive inconsistency in enforcement, delays in adjudication and occasional misuse of powers as well. Therefore, effective reform must enhance transparency and accountability of wildlife crime enforcement processes (Rachael, 2019).

The centralized reporting systems, community liaison mechanisms and predictable judicial processes would strengthen community cooperation while encouraging reporting of crimes and rebuilding confidence in conservation law (Olujobi and Yebisi, 2023). Hence, by integrating procedural fairness and accessibility into her enforcement system, Tanzania would not only advance environmental justice but also strengthen her intelligence gathering capacity which is indispensable for addressing sophisticated wildlife offence networks (Evince, 2005).

Finally, the reform agenda in Tanzania should recognize that wildlife offence commission is increasingly trans-national; thus, requiring national institutions being capable of interoperating with regional wildlife enforcement bodies. Tanzanian fragmented approach limits her ability to engage in the coordinated information sharing, joint investigations and harmonized prosecutorial mechanisms envisioned under the Lusaka Agreement and EAC regimes (Mairo, 2021). Institutional consolidation, prosecutorial coherence as well as judicial specialization would place Tanzania in an effective position to meet regional commitments and pursuing trans-boundary wildlife crime enforcement in a manner that enhances deterrence throughout the region'

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The effectiveness of wildlife crime regulation in East Africa depends far more on institutional structure and procedural design than on the severity or breadth of legislative prohibitions. Tanzanian legal regime, although among the most punitive and comprehensive in the region, remains structurally incapable of attaining its intended deterrent consequences due to the fact that its wildlife enforcement institutions are fragmented, prosecutorial processes are poorly coordinated, and its judicial mechanisms are misaligned with the operational realities of wildlife offences.

By contrast, Uganda illustrates that even moderately stringent statutes can attain effective enforcement outcomes when enforced through a coherent administrative authority while supported by aligned prosecutorial pathways and adjudicated within a specialized judicial forum. Thus, fragmentation, procedural delays and generalist adjudication affect both deterrence and environmental justice by reducing the certainty, consistency and accessibility of the enforcement process.

Ugandan experience provides a clear lesson that integrating investigative, administrative and prosecutorial functions within a unified institution improves evidentiary continuity, coordination and enhances predictability of wildlife crime enforcement outcomes. The establishment of the SUWC further shows the values of specialization for complex regulatory crimes by producing jurisprudential consistency, improving trial efficiency and reinforcing public trust in the criminal justice system.

Thus, these institutional features directly advance the theoretical requirements of deterrence by ensuring that sanction is both swift and certain. Also, the institutional features should advance environmental justice by ensuring that local communities who bear the effects of wildlife offences experience timely and competent adjudication of crimes. Therefore, Tanzanian continued reliance on structurally mismatched procedures under the EOCCA and its lack of specialized judicial system illustrate how institutional regime can neutralize the effectiveness of even the comprehensive statutory provisions.

Therefore, the analysis supports several targeted recommendations, including the first one that Tanzania must pursue institutional consolidation or functional harmonization within her wildlife crime enforcement landscape. The overlapping powers of the TANAPA, TAWA, MNRT, NPS, PCCB, NCAA, and PT create structural

inefficiencies that cannot be mitigated via legislation alone. Thus, consolidating wildlife crime enforcement authority or by establishing a clear hierarchy of obligations would enhance operational clarity and certainty so as to reduce procedural frictions. Second, Tanzania must adopt an approach of early-stage prosecutorial involvement by ensuring that prosecutors collaborate with investigators from the outset to avoid defective charges, evidentiary loopholes and unnecessary delays. Thus, this reform would improve the predictive capacity of the criminal justice system and align enforcement more closely with deterrence principles.

Third, Tanzania should establish a specialized wildlife criminal court or a dedicated wildlife criminal division within its judicial system. Specialization of courts would cultivate judicial expertise, reduce statutory interpretive inconsistencies, expedite case resolution and facilitate the development of a coherent body of wildlife jurisprudence as well. Thus, such a forum would transform Tanzanian wildlife crimes from procedurally complex economic offences into a properly regulated domain governed by technical competence and procedural efficiency as well.

Fourth, Tanzania should translate her treaty commitments into institutional practice by aligning her administrative and judicial regimes with the operational expectations of CITES, CBD, and regional enforcement regimes. Thus, substantive domestication must be complemented by procedural internationalization if Tanzania is to participate effectively in trans-boundary enforcement efforts.

Fifth, strengthening legitimacy and community confidence must be recognized as a central component of wildlife crimes regulation in the country. Local communities living near protected areas or game reserves cannot meaningfully cooperate with authorities or share intelligence if the enforcement regime appears inconsistent, opaque or inaccessible at all. So, institutional coherence, prosecutorial precision and judicial specialization are not only legal reforms but mechanisms for enhancing environmental justice and ensuring that the burdens of wildlife offences do not fall disproportionately on vulnerable communities.

In making grounded applications apart from epistemological contributions, Tanzania can draw the following actions from Uganda in addressing and redressing wildlife crime:

One, Escalating legislative penalties. Tanzania should amend its Principal Wildlife Legislation to reflect the financial and punitive severity seen in the landmark Uganda Wildlife Act of 2019.

Two, imposing life sentences. Tanzania should enact mandatory life imprisonment sentences for high-tier traffickers caught with critically endangered species like rhinos, elephants, or pangolins. The country should enact penalty upper-limits to match Uganda's threshold of up to UGX 20 Billion (approx. \$5.4 million USD) for top-tier illegal possession. This turns wildlife crime from a "high-profit, low-risk" venture into an economically catastrophic risk for kingpins.

Three, establish a dedicated Wildlife Criminal Court. Tanzania's judiciary often faces backlogs, meaning complex wildlife trafficking cases are mixed into standard criminal rosters, resulting in delays and lost evidence. It should replicate Uganda's Standards, Utilities, and Wildlife Court, which utilizes specialized magistrates who understand wildlife law, forensics, and corporate concealment.

Four, deploying advanced cargo scanning at border posts. Uganda transformed its reputation as a porous regional smuggling hub by embedding anti-trafficking mechanics directly into its fiscal infrastructure. The same way, the TRA should follow the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) model by installing high-grade cargo scanners at all major One-Stop Border Posts.

Five, adopting legal protocols informed by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Legal Atlas in Uganda to address gaps on how live animal exhibits are treated as court evidence. As such, Tanzania should legislate rapid-release mechanisms so that live confiscated wildlife can be immediately rehabilitated or returned to the wild rather than being tied up indefinitely as deteriorating court property.

Generally, the Tanzanian wildlife crime regime contains the statutory foundations necessary for effective deterrence and meaningful environmental protection but legislations alone cannot resolve the structural

limitations of fragmented institutions and misaligned procedures. Ugandan integrated and specialized model provides a compelling approach for structural reform. If Tanzania adopts a coherent institutional structure supported by coordinated prosecution and specialized adjudication, it can transform its legislative strength into genuine enforcement capacity. Thus, such reforms would align the state's legal regime with the theoretical demands of deterrence and environmental justice and elevate its role in international and regional efforts to curb wildlife crimes.

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