

Avoiding damaging the ministry of others

It's not unsurprising that independent mission workers often just turn up in a country and get on with their ministry without much concern for what others are doing there. Sometimes this is not a significant problem, since the more people there are in mission the better. However, particularly in Creative Access Nations (ones in which Christians have to be careful about drawing attention to themselves) you may be inadvertently treading on the toes of people who have been working away subtly for years.

Overt evangelism is an example of this sort of behaviour. You may feel it is alright for you to stand on a street corner in a Moslem or communist country and preach the gospel openly. You believe that if the authorities object, you're safe. You may get a bit of a grilling by the police but in the end you'll just get thrown out of the country. But you might inadvertently have triggered a clampdown on Christians generally, which could result in many local believers being imprisoned. Entire agencies who have laboured patiently and unobtrusively in the country for years may have their presence in the country ended.

Failure to abide by cultural norms also can do a lot of damage (see [Being Cross-Culturally Aware](#)). For instance, teaching Christians that it is ok to drink alcohol in a country where they are traditionally teetotal will bring you into conflict with other Christians. You may be right, but perhaps the local Christians should decide for themselves rather than have you challenge the way they do things. Engaging in any activity which might bring other Christians into disrepute would also cause huge trouble. For example, travelling alone in a car with a person of the opposite sex to whom you're not related or married. It might mean nothing in your culture, but in somebody else's it could mean you are in an inappropriate relationship. Whose rules are you going to follow? Your own, or your host culture's?

So *please* don't embark on a high profile ministry without first consulting closely with the local believers who may pay the price for it, or those who have been in the country for many years and know what you can get away with. It is often more effective to have a cautious and low-profile ministry which stays in a country for decades than to make a big impact and initiate widespread persecution.