

Security Briefs 28 – Digital SIR: Part 2 – Respect and Digital Engagement

Introduction

In our last episode, we introduced the idea of Digital SIR—how Legitimacy and Awareness apply to your online presence as a global worker.

Today, we're going to complete that picture by focusing more deeply on the principle of Respect in the digital world. We'll look at how respect shapes not just what we post, but how we engage with others—and we'll share a few real-life examples that bring these ideas to life.

Let's dive in.

Digital Respect

Respect, the third principle of SIR, is foundational to cross-cultural ministry—and it's just as essential online as it is face-to-face.

In the digital world, respect means more than avoiding online arguments. It means choosing humility and dignity in how we communicate, especially when we engage with local culture, religion, and authority.

Let me give you an example. In one country, a worker posted a sarcastic meme about a local religious festival. What he meant as humor was viewed as offensive by locals. The result? He was reported to the authorities and questioned by police. He was later denied his visa renewal.

Another worker used her Facebook account to passionately criticize gender inequality in her host country. Her intention was noble, but local friends saw it as arrogant. It damaged her relationships — and her credibility.

Respect in the digital space is about tone as much as content. Even when we disagree, we must communicate in ways that honor the people and systems around us.

Respect also involves how we treat others online. Here are some ways that we can show digital respect for others:

- Avoid posting photos of local believers, ministry partners, or events without clear and informed consent.
- Don't tag people in ways that link them to sensitive work or religious activity.

- Be mindful of metadata—some photos and apps embed GPS information automatically.

Here's another real example. A global worker posted a selfie with a new believer. Even though the caption was vague, local police recognized the location. The national partner was arrested, and the missionary was deported.

These aren't scare tactics. They're reminders that our love must extend to the digital world — where our actions, however well-meaning, can have unintended consequences.

Here is a mindset that we can all adopt to ensure we are showing digital respect for others.

When you post, ask yourself:

- Does this reflect humility?
- Does this protect the people I care about?
- Does this help or hinder the reputation of Christ?

Conclusion

Now you know: Digital Respect isn't just about avoiding mistakes. It's about embracing a posture of love and honor—online and off.

The way you engage on social media, messaging apps, and email can either build bridges or burn them.

So let your respect be visible everywhere — especially in the unseen corners of your digital life.

We'll see you next time.