



## **THE BACERS INITIATIVE:**

# **EMPOWERING NIGERIA WITH CPR AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the heart of Nigeria, where bustling cities and rural communities intertwine, too many lives are tragically lost in emergencies that could have been prevented. Picture this—on April 10, 2024, Junior Pope, a beloved Nollywood actor, is pulled from the water after a boat accident, unconscious and unresponsive. He is surrounded by bystanders frozen in helplessness. Their hands tremble, their minds race, yet they lack the one skill that could save his life: a basic understanding of CPR [1]. This moment, echoing the experiences of countless Nigerians exposes a stark truth—when faced with an emergency, we are dangerously unprepared.

## TRAGEDIES WE COULD HAVE PREVENTED

The 2024 Jos building collapse, which claimed the lives of 22 children within moments, brought similar scenes of confusion and helplessness. Those nearby watched in horror, powerless to offer even basic assistance as survivors lay trapped beneath the rubble [2]. In Ibadan, a building collapse on October 31, 2024, echoed the same tragic narrative, with men and women losing their lives in an instant [3]. These are not isolated events but recurring tragedies that highlight the critical need for Nigerians to have the knowledge and skills to act when every second counts.

## A LIFELINE FOR NIGERIA

Junior Pope's story, along with the incidents in Jos and Ibadan, are haunting reminders of how urgently Nigeria needs a culture of emergency preparedness and basic life-saving skills. This is precisely where the Basic Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Response Strategies (BACERS) project steps in.

## A VISION FOR CHANGE

The OCI Foundation's BACERS initiative aims to change the narrative by empowering Nigerians, starting as young as ten years old, with the knowledge and confidence to act in life-or-death situations. BACERS is more than just a program; it is a nationwide mission to equip at least 50% of Nigerians with essential CPR skills within two years, reaching 75% by five years [4]. But to succeed, this ambitious goal requires innovative strategies that can bridge knowledge gaps, sustain engagement, and break down the barriers that have left Nigerians untrained and unequipped.

As someone entrusted to oversee this transformative project, I am committed to ensuring that no family loses a loved one simply because no one knew what to do. With targeted partnerships, digital tools, and grassroots involvement, BACERS will reach Nigerians across all 36 states and the FCT. Together, we can turn helplessness into action and, ultimately, save lives. With the right approach, Junior Pope's story—and those of Jos and Ibadan—will become tales of the past, as Nigeria rises to empower its people with the knowledge to save lives.

## OCI FOUNDATION'S IMPACT

The OCI Foundation has long been at the forefront of addressing critical health challenges in Nigeria, with initiatives such as the Arm Our Youths (ArOY) Anti-Cancer Health Campaign setting a high standard for grassroots health education and intervention. This campaign, focusing on cancer prevention, has been instrumental in equipping Nigerian youths with vital knowledge through innovative approaches like the CerviBreast Mobile Application and partnerships with institutions like the NYSC [5]. By reaching students at the secondary and tertiary education levels, ArOY has made a significant impact, raising awareness and fostering a proactive approach to health within these communities.

## **THE BLUEPRINT; AROY'S SUCCESS**

The OCI Foundation's success in mobilizing the youth and leveraging technology for health education demonstrates the immense potential for replicating similar efforts in other areas of public health. One of the foundation's key strengths is its ability to reach diverse Nigerian communities, using cost-effective and sustainable methods. The foundation's partnerships, especially with key players like the Nigerian National Assembly and educational institutions, have proven crucial in gaining the support necessary for large-scale change. By involving these stakeholders, OCI Foundation has effectively enhanced its campaigns' reach and sustainability.

## **BACERS' BIG LEAP**

These established strategies can serve as a blueprint for the OCI Foundation's upcoming Basic Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Response Strategies (BACERS) project. Like the ArOY campaign, BACERS aims to educate and equip Nigerians with life-saving skills, targeting youths across all 36 states of the federation. The foundation's track record in implementing successful health campaigns is a strong foundation upon which BACERS can thrive. Its experience with nationwide initiatives ensures that it understands the nuances of creating impactful educational programs for a wide-reaching audience.

By focusing on youth and integrating technological tools like mobile apps, the OCI Foundation has already proven the power of education and innovation in tackling public health issues. These same strategies can be applied to BACERS, ensuring that basic CPR skills and emergency response knowledge are ingrained in the population. With the same level of commitment, strategic partnerships, and use of technology, the foundation can continue to make significant strides in improving the health outcomes of Nigerians, one community at a time.

## STRATEGIES

To maximize the impact of the Basic Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Response Strategies (BACERS) project, the OCI Foundation can leverage strategic partnerships, technology, legislative advocacy, phased engagement, and media outreach. Each of these elements, already proven successful in past OCI Foundation initiatives, can drive the project's goal of equipping Nigerians with essential life-saving skills.

### **Power of Partnerships**

Building on successful collaborations, such as the partnership with the Nigerian Medical Students Association (NiMSA) during the LAMS competition, the OCI Foundation can further expand the BACERS initiative by engaging schools, universities, and national organizations like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). These partnerships can broaden outreach, ensuring that CPR training and emergency response protocols become part of educational and community-based programs across Nigeria. Through these alliances, the Foundation can reach diverse groups and create a culture of readiness within the educational sector and beyond [6] [7].

### **Tech-Driven Training**

Technology offers another powerful tool for scalability. Drawing inspiration from the CerviBreast Mobile Phone Application used in the Arm Our Youths (ArOY) campaign, the Foundation could develop a mobile app or online platform for interactive CPR training. This digital approach would make training accessible to Nigerians nationwide, especially in remote or underserved areas. Emerging tools such as gamification and virtual reality can be incorporated to enhance learning retention and engagement, ensuring that people are not only learning CPR but also practicing it with high effectiveness.

### **Legislative Change Ahead**

Legislative advocacy can provide long-term sustainability for the BACERS initiative. Following progress with the ArOY campaign, which involved advocacy for cancer prevention, the OCI Foundation can push for policies requiring CPR and emergency response training in schools and public institutions. By working with local and national governments, the Foundation could drive the institutionalization of CPR education, making it a mandated component of Nigerian educational policy. This would embed life-saving skills within the population and ensure future generations are prepared to respond to emergencies [8].

### **Sustaining Momentum**

Like other OCI Foundation programs, a step-by-step rollout could keep BACERS engaging over time. Starting with practical CPR training, followed by regular refresher courses and nationwide campaigns, would build lasting impact. Each stage would draw in more participants and add certified responders across Nigeria. This approach allows BACERS to adapt and expand, reaching new people and addressing evolving needs, ensuring it grows stronger and more effective over time.

### **Media Power**

Finally, media outreach can amplify BACERS' reach and effectiveness. Utilizing both traditional media and social media platforms, the OCI Foundation can share testimonials, success stories, and live CPR demonstrations to spread awareness and drive public participation. Strategic media campaigns would reinforce the importance of CPR skills, creating a ripple effect that promotes widespread adoption of emergency response measures.

## CONCLUSION

The OCI Foundation's Basic Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Response Strategies (BACERS) project holds transformative potential for Nigeria. Through strategic partnerships, technology, legislative advocacy, phased engagement, and media outreach, BACERS is poised to embed life-saving skills into the nation's culture, equipping everyday citizens to act in critical moments.

This initiative isn't just about teaching CPR; it's about fostering a prepared, resilient society. By empowering Nigerians, from students to adults, BACERS promises to turn helplessness into action, ensuring that stories of preventable tragedies become memories of a past Nigeria has moved beyond. With BACERS, the OCI Foundation is paving the way for a future where Nigerians are not mere bystanders in emergencies but active responders who can save lives.

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