

**SECONDS MATTER: THE IMPACT OF EARLY CPR IN CARDIAC
EMERGENCIES AND JUSTIFYING THE OCI FOUNDATION'S PLAN
TO EMPOWER ALL NIGERIANS THROUGH THE “BASIC CARDIO-
PULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR) AND EMERGENCY
RESPONSE STRATEGIES (BACERS)” PROJECT.**

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INTRODUCTION: Why Seconds Matter In Cardiac Emergencies.

In 2020, 23-year-old Chineme Martins, a vibrant footballer for Nasarawa United, collapsed unopposed—during a match against Katsina United. Amidst the panic, resuscitation efforts failed. The defibrillator? Faulty.

According to BBC Sport Africa, his brother Michael, a fire rescue worker, recounted:

“Even to administer CPR that a layman could do, the so-called personnel couldn’t.”

“The crowd fanned him with a cloth—no ventilation, no structure. Just the ‘Nigerian factor’ at play” (BBC Sport Africa, 2020).

Shockingly, five years later, similar stories persist. In February 2025, 43-year-old Danjuma Abraham slumped and died in his bathroom in Gwagwalada.

“He was hale and hearty,” said his relative. “Then suddenly, he collapsed.” These aren’t isolated cases.

Ademolu Adegbeniga, the special assistant to the Lagos State Commissioner for Health, stressed that first aid education is a life-saving necessity. Speaking at a first aid training event for emergency responders in Lagos, Pascal Achunine of the Health Emergency Initiative added:

“Ignorance is our biggest gap. Many Nigerians don’t know CPR or emergency numbers” (Punch Newspaper, 2025).

This is a national wake-up call. We must normalize learning basic life-saving skills—and



that's where the BACERS Project comes in. The Basic Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Response Strategies initiative aims to reduce preventable deaths by equipping Nigerians with

critical emergency response skills. This essay explores how BACERS can help tackle avoidable mortality in our communities.

THE SILENT KILLER: What Happens During Cardiac Arrest?

We might want to know why knowing how to perform a basic life support practice like CPR is important? Because cardiac arrest has caused the lives of many.

Cardiac arrest is the abrupt halt of heart activity, leading to immediate hemodynamic collapse.

On the other hand, sudden cardiac death (SCD) refers to an unexpected death believed to be cardiac in origin, occurring within an hour of the onset of symptoms or within 24 hours of the person last being seen alive and well (NCBI Bookshelf, 2024).

That is why, when the heart stops beating, oxygen delivery to vital organs, especially the brain drops drastically, which can lead to instant death if not promptly addressed.

According to a recent update from the Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) website, if CPR is initiated within the first two minutes after cardiac arrest, the heart can still supply oxygen to the brain, preventing both brain damage and death (ACLS, 2025).

And these are not just theories. They are facts backed by data from real communities and individuals who have implemented early CPR and witnessed its life-saving impact.



HOW EARLY CPR SAVES LIVES.

Here's the story of 8-year-old Sofia Montoya, whose life was saved after a staff member immediately performed CPR when she slumped while playing (Stanford Medicine, 2016). The CPR continued until help arrived and she was rushed to the hospital. That single act made all the difference.

Even celebrities have stepped up in emergencies. Jennifer Lawrence, the actress best known for her role in The Hunger Games, once noticed a woman collapse nearby while walking her dog in California. She acted quickly, dialed 911 and administered CPR and first aid until emergency responders arrived (CPR Knoxville).

What's even more surprising? Children can perform successful CPR too.

A recent study assessed sixth graders' ability to perform hands-on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the results were promising. Most of the students could carry out compressions at the correct rate and in the right location. This makes young people a powerful population to train in life-saving techniques.

The American Heart Association, through its CPR in Schools program, is actively committed to educating the next generation of lifesavers.

THE REALITY IN NIGERIA: A Gap That Costs Lives.

In a country like Nigeria, where many people are often more focused on content creation, filming others in life-threatening situations instead of helping, it is crucial to raise awareness about the importance of CPR. This message must reach both the educated



and uneducated.

And that's exactly what the BACERS Project by the OCI Foundation aims to achieve: empowering Nigerians to act, not just observe.

INTRODUCING THE BACERS PROJECT BY THE OCI FOUNDATION.

The OCI Foundation's BACERS Project stands for Basic Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Response Strategies. It is a revolutionary national initiative in Nigeria aimed at eliminating avoidable fatalities from accidents and medical emergencies. The project seeks to empower Nigerians aged 10 years and older with life-saving emergency response skills, including CPR.

Through extensive training and knowledge-sharing, BACERS aims to reach at least 50% of Nigerians within two years, and 75% within five years of its launch (OCI Foundation, 2025).

By equipping everyday citizens across all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with the skills and confidence to act during emergencies, the project envisions a nation where avoidable deaths from sudden collapses and accidents become rare.

Its core objectives include:

- * Training at least 50% of Nigerians in two years and 75% in five years.
- * Building nationwide competence through partnerships with schools, the Nigerian



Medical Students Association (NiMSA), and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC).

- * Leveraging modern tools and technology to deliver accessible and scalable training.

- * Embedding emergency response strategies into schools, communities, and workplaces.

- * Advocating for legislative support and using media outreach to create a culture of readiness.

Ultimately, BACERS aims to build a society where Nigerians are empowered to respond to crises, save lives, and prevent avoidable tragedies. Its mission aligns with strengthening Nigeria's emergency response infrastructure and cultivating life-saving skills in the general population.

EMPOWERING A NATION, ONE LIFE SAVER AT A TIME.

In a bid to promote greater health sustainability in Nigeria, every citizen must receive CPR training. As a nation, we have a collective responsibility to contribute to each other's well-being. Regardless of where we find ourselves, performing a simple CPR technique on someone fighting for their life can make all the difference.

Sadly, instead of acting, many Nigerians would rather pull out their phones to record and share a tragedy on social media, when what's truly needed is action.

One of the key elements of the 2014 National Health Act is the promotion of Public-Private Partnerships. The Act encourages collaboration between the public and private health sectors to harness more resources and expertise in strengthening healthcare



delivery (National Health Act, 2014).

This is exactly what the BACERS Project is set to achieve, uniting communities, institutions, and organizations to save lives. In the long run, initiatives like this will play a major role in reducing avoidable mortality rates across the country.

BEYOND BACERS: Steps to Sustain a CPR-Trained Nigeria.

To sustain a CPR-trained Nigeria beyond initial programs like BACERS, several key strategies must be implemented:

1. Widespread, Ongoing CPR Training:

CPR and Basic Life Support (BLS) training must be regular, affordable, and accessible across Nigeria. Credible bodies like Emergency Response Africa (ERA), hospitals, and NGOs should host sessions in schools, workplaces, markets, and communities. Courses should cover hands-only CPR and rescue breathing for all age groups.

2. CPR as a Lifelong Skill:

CPR must be seen as a life skill, not just a certificate. Citizens should take refresher courses and stay updated with new guidelines. This fosters a culture of continuous learning, readiness, and quick community response.

3. Community Awareness & Advocacy:

CPR-trained individuals should serve as community advocates. Through school



clubs, religious events, outreach campaigns, and social media, they can raise awareness and encourage others to get trained.

4. Access to AEDs:

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), though scarce in Nigeria, can save lives during cardiac arrests. Installing AEDs in malls, airports, schools, and offices, and training citizens on their use, should be a national priority.

5. Institutional Support:

CPR training should be included in national health and education policies. Making it part of school curricula and workplace safety programs will ensure long-term impact.

6. Locally Relevant CPR Training:

CPR education must reflect Nigeria's realities, covering emergency numbers, scene safety, and simple rescue techniques. Using culturally relevant tools and languages will improve retention.

By empowering communities with emergency skills, these strategies will ensure that BACERS is more than a program, it becomes a national safety net.

CONCLUSION.

A country's value for human life is revealed in how it responds to emergencies, and that's the heart of the BACERS Project.



When a heart stops, every second matters. Early CPR can mean the difference between life and death. BACERS is more than training; it's a national call to action, empowering everyday Nigerians to become lifesavers.

This mission goes beyond public health. It's about shared responsibility, love, and timely action.

No Nigerian should lose their life simply because someone nearby didn't know what to do. Together, we can build a future where every Nigerian is equipped and prepared to save a life, when it counts the most. Let's work towards a future where every Nigerian is ready, and every second count.

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