

BGRS Education Portfolio

Transforming Learning in One of Ethiopia's Most Neglected States



Pharo Foundation's education work in Benishangul-Gumuz (BGRS) complements our pioneering Homosha boarding school through a broader portfolio of initiatives that are reshaping access to quality education in one of Ethiopia's most underserved states. Our flagship is Pharo School Assosa, supported by major programmes that strengthen public schools. Together, these efforts aim to place BGRS back on the education map, not just by building schools, but by raising standards and opportunities across the region.

The Problem

In Assosa and surrounding woredas like Menge, Homosha, and Undulu, access to quality secondary education remains limited. Infrastructure is often weak, teacher training capacitated in pockets, and resource gaps persist—factors that hold student performance below national benchmarks and exacerbate gender imbalances. In primary education, the Gender Parity Index in BGRS is about 0.86, indicating that girls are enrolling and staying in school at lower rates than boys. Early childhood education is also limited: BGRS's pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio hovers around 38%, while the Net Enrolment Ratio is about 25% (UNICEF).

Families often face costs or labor demands that discourage school attendance, and teaching quality and materials remain uneven in many schools. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic further widened learning gaps: in Ethiopia, foundational numeracy among Grade 1 students fell by around 15 percentage points after closures, with rural and poorer regions hit hardest. Given these persistent challenges, interventions in BGRS are essential to ensure that the next generation is not left behind.





In BGRS, our work has focused on three fronts: building and running our own model school, introducing innovative teaching methods through *Teaching at the Right Level* (TaRL) and computer-assisted learning, and upgrading the infrastructure of public schools.

Pharo School Assosa, established in 2020, began as a primary school and quickly became so popular that we added secondary classes. To meet the growing demand, we built a new campus on a 9,000 square meter site in the heart of Assosa. The school has already enrolled more than 1000 students, with modern classrooms, dedicated playgrounds for each age group, and facilities designed to support a holistic education.

Alongside this flagship school, we launched the *BGRS Education Acceleration Programme* to strengthen literacy and numeracy in public schools. Using TaRL and Computer Assisted Learning (CAL), the programme is active in Assosa and Benishangul Primary Schools for grades 3 to 8. These approaches tailor lessons to students' actual learning levels rather than a one-size-fits-all curriculum, significantly improving outcomes. In the CAL lab, 22 student workstations connected to a teacher-controlled server give pupils access to thousands of interactive digital resources.

Finally, through the *Social and Economic Empowerment Programme*, we tackled the basics that hold schools back. Renovated and expanded classrooms, better water and sanitation facilities, new learning materials, and parental engagement are helping to build a stronger foundation for quality education across the region.

Facts & Figures

- ▶ **99% pass rate** in Grade 6 regional exams
- ▶ **100% pass rate** in Grade 8 regional exams



- ▶ **Top achievers:** One student earned the highest average in the region, with 6 / 10 top achievers from Pharo School Assosa.
- ▶ **22-station CAL lab** installed at Assosa Primary, enabling teacher-guided and self-paced learning.



A Student Story

Pharo School Assosa student Helen Tekalign embodies what's possible when students are given opportunity. In 2023, she placed third in Ethiopia's national Science and Technology Competition, competing against 178 students and 211 projects. In 2024, she ranked first in a STEM competition organised by BGRS, developing an online results-management system that allows parents to access exam results—a simple but transformative solution. Helen's journey has even taken her onto the Foundation's Afri-CAN Podcast, where she discussed her ambitions alongside leading African innovators.