Creating Healthy Approaches to Success (CHATS) is a two-year, life skills curriculum developed by Advancing Girls’ Education in Africa (AGE Africa). The curriculum targets rural and impoverished adolescent Malawian girls aged 13-19 with the aim of improving academic performance, retention and attendance in secondary school, health outcomes and post-secondary transitions. Girls gain leadership training as well as knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health career pathways. Utilizing a unique peer-led approach, the curriculum is designed for implementation in Malawi’s rural and under-resourced community day secondary schools.

AGE Africa’s CHATS curriculum begins in Form 1/Term 1 and the five-term course covers: sexual and reproductive health (SRH); group facilitation and self-advocacy; gender and rights; organization and study skills; identifying and accessing tertiary educational opportunities; entrepreneurship; making and executing a realistic life plan; exploring career tracks; and building peer communities of support.

The curriculum is divided into school terms and further divided into sessions which are referred to as “CHATS”. Many of the CHATS are structured as an informal peer-led conversation that allows participants to coach each other through difficult topics and decision-making scenarios. AGE Africa trains school faculty as student-mentors. Students are trained and empowered as peer-mentors and facilitators to deliver the curriculum in partnership with teachers. AGE Africa provides guidance and ongoing training and support to teachers and students to implement a curriculum that is focused on robust content and developing core competencies tailored to adolescent Malawian girls’ realities. The following further describes the structure of the CHATS Curriculum:

- Curriculum consists of five terms referred to as sections; each section consists of 5-10 sessions or “CHATS” which typically run 45-60 minutes delivered after school (except the first three CHATS, which are longer and are delivered over the course of a weekend).
- The curriculum features guest speakers at consistent intervals to ensure that girls are regularly exposed to relevant role models and career options.
- Throughout the course, students are given take home exercises designed to strengthen their English skills for better facilitation and academic outcomes.
- The curriculum is co-facilitated by student teams and overseen by faculty advisors in partnership with AGE Africa mentors.
- AGE provides the AGE Africa Scholar CHATS Manual for students and the AGE Africa Instructor CHATS Manual for facilitators. The CHATS Manual consists of vital SRH content as well as career guidance information that will act as a reference guide for students beyond the scope of this project.

The AGE Africa CHATS curriculum program evaluation methodology and data collection tools will be tested in spring/summer 2013, with full implementation scheduled for fall term 2013. Study of prior AGE Africa program outcomes as well as student surveys conducted in 2009 and 2011 in partnership with an alumnae survey conducted in 2012, have informed the development of the current curriculum and methodology. A rigorous program evaluation will assess the degree to which the curriculum impacts girls’ abilities to complete secondary school, develop problem-solving, self-advocacy and leadership skills, and successfully navigate post-secondary transitions. An overview of the CHATS curriculum follows. The accompanying monitoring and evaluation framework is provided in the annex.
1.1 **Peer Mentoring, Group Facilitation, Decision Making, and Reproductive Health:** The CHATS curriculum begins by building skills that help girls to work together and take on leadership roles, and by providing information that is critical for their health and continued education. CHATS participants engage in a weekend-long training (CHATS 1-3) where students are trained as group facilitators and peer mentors. Beginning in CHAT 4 students practice their facilitator and mentoring skills by leading select CHATS. Topics in term 1 focus on health decision making and sex, gender, rights, STDs, pregnancy and staying safe.

1) Introduction to Peer Mentoring
2) Introduction to Group Facilitation
3) Techniques of Peer Mentoring and Group Facilitation
4) Together We Aspire! Together We Achieve!
   - Students build relationships with each other, and identify group norms, rules, and values for the next two years.
5) Knowing Your Rights and Setting Healthy Goals
   - Girls identify gender inequality, learn basic human rights and set personal goals for achievement.
6) Who Am I? Guest Speaker – Nurse
   - Students learn the basic physiology of female and male genitalia and women’s reproduction.
7) Health and Reproduction
   - Students learn how to prevent STDs and about the pros and cons of different types of contraceptives. Girls engage in peer-led conversations about their own sexuality.
8) Healthy Decision-Making
   - Students role play and practice advising each other in situations of sexual harassment, abuse and forced marriage. Students develop critical thinking skills for dealing with these situations. Topics from CHATS 6 and 7 are reinforced.
9) Peer Pressure
   - Students role play and dispel myths about sex and gender. They advise each other in situations of peer pressure around unhealthy behaviors. Conducted with female and male peers. Topics from CHATS 6-8 are reinforced.
10) Who Is My Friend Indeed
    - Students identify and learn how to maintain and nurture healthy behaviors and relationships.

CHATS Overview: Year 1—Form 1, Term 2

1.2 **Study Skills and Academic Leadership:** Girls are taught to develop critical study strategies and organizational skills and learn how to take an active role in their education. The CHATS Curriculum supports foundational academic skills early on in the secondary education cycle. Girls must be prepared for Junior Certificate Exams (JCE) – if they fail they will not progress to Form 3. Because more than 25% of girls fail the JCE every year, CHATS ensures that girls have positive learning strategies and know how to utilize the full range of resources at their disposal.

1) My School, My Home
   - Students discuss the challenges of balancing school and home obligations, identify personal goals and learn the academic requirements for achieving goals.
2) How Can I Study So I Can Understand
   - Students learn vital strategies for studying, note taking and active reading.
3) My School, My Plan
   - Students identify core subjects, key requirements and the different pathways to higher education. Students are asked to begin developing their academic plan for the next three years.
4) Guest Speakers – AGE Africa alumna university student and a professional woman
5) My Study Time Table
   - Girls create calendars to help them balance home responsibilities with study and academic time.
6) Study Circle
   - Participants learn strategies for utilizing study groups and set schedules for meeting.
7) How to Research
   - Students learn how to utilize books, school libraries, and AGE Africa resources to aid their learning and to help students through difficult subjects.
8) Self-Advocacy
   - Topics from Term 1, CHATS 6-8 reinforced through role play within a classroom context.
9) Leadership and Building Self-Esteem
   - Topics from Term 1, CHATS 5, 9 and 10 reinforced through role play.
**CHATS Overview: Year 1—Form 1, Term 3**

**1.3 Preparing to ‘Jump Carefully’:** Section 1.3 prepares students for their Junior Certificate Examination (known as ‘jumping carefully’ in the Malawian vernacular). In Term 3 guest speakers focus on the importance of using their Form 2 year to prepare for the JCE and provide practical study sessions to help students learn how to manage self-directed review.

1) **Guest Speaker** – female Ministry of Education official
2) **Tutor** – conducts intensive study sessions with students and teaches testing strategies.
3) **Communicating Through Technology**
   - Students learn how to utilize the internet for research and cell phones to stay in touch with friends and AGE Africa.
4) **Let Us Jump Carefully (JCE)/Move Carefully (MSCE)**
   - Students create personal study plans based on their strengths and weaknesses.

**CHATS Overview: Year 2—Form 2, Term 1**

**2.1 Accessing Tertiary Education and Career Planning:** The first term of year 2 provides students with concrete information about scores, application procedures, and strategies for effective planning and contingency planning in order to access higher education. Information about tertiary education is not readily available to most students or faculty in rural Malawi. This curriculum is critical for students so they know their options beyond high school and to plan effectively.

1) **MSCE Passing Scores and Credits**
   - Review of section 1.3 CHAT 1 and in depth discussion of qualifying scores and credits for passing grades and qualifying for higher education.
2) **Types of Tertiary Education**
   - Students learn about vocational schools, university, certificate courses and diplomas.
3) **Entry to Teacher Training College (TTC) and Technical Schools (TS)**
   - Focus on entry requirements, application process, career paths and career opportunities.
4) **Guest Speaker** – AGE Africa alumna on progressing from TTC and TS
5) **Entry to University**
   - Entry requirements, application process, career paths and career opportunities.
6) **Guest Speakers** – AGE Alumna on university entry and expectations.
7) **Life Planning** (determining and drafting a sound life plan).

**CHATS Overview: Year 2—Form 2, Term 2**

**2.2 Self-Employment & Small Business:** Business skills are important for all students for potential self-employment and to better manage personal financial decisions such as household expenditures and loans. This section provides an introduction and interactive activities to better prepare students for various facets of life and to generate income for their families in a village context. Students will participate in drafting and finalizing a small business plan that they can use at home.

1) **Intro to Tertiary Education**
   - Students learn about small business principles for formal and non-formal sectors and identify entrepreneurs.
2) **Business Ideas and Market Analysis**
   - Students are taught to critically analyze their communities and identify market gaps.
3) **Capital and Savings**
   - An introduction to banks, merry-go-rounds, village savings and loans clubs and other sources of capital.
4) **Guest Speaker** – Village Savings and Loans Club member on financing a small business
5) **Profit Margins, Breaking Even and Business Success**
   - Students learn basic math and templates for calculating a break-even point and analyzing a business’ success.
6) **Basic Accounting**
   - Students learn to keep basic ledgers and books to track income, assets, and expenses.
7) **Guest Speaker** – Skills building in Handicrafts
8) **Guest Speaker** – Skills building in innovative agricultural products.
### AGE Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Monitoring Activity</th>
<th>Data Collection Resource/Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Improve secondary school completion rates</td>
<td>1.1a - Student fees provided through scholarship</td>
<td>1.1am - Number of full scholarships, academic materials, bicycles, etc. provided records count risks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1b - Demonstrated leadership in group facilitation</td>
<td>2.1bl - Total number of discussions and presentations led aggregate or percentage Facilitator Log/Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Improved academic performance</td>
<td>1.2a - Improved academic grades post form (math, science, English skills)</td>
<td>1.2am - Individual scholar term scores; overall average scholar scores aggregate or percentage Term Grades/Reporting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.2b - AGE scholars are promoted to next form</td>
<td>1.2bm Percentage of scholars promoted to next form aggregate or percentage Term Grades/Reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2c - Scholars receiving secondary school certificates</td>
<td>1.2cm Number of secondary school certificates received; MSCE Scores aggregate or percentage Term Grades/Reporting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.2d - Reported study plan activity</td>
<td>1.2dm - Frequency of study plan activities aggregate or percentage CC</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Increased knowledge of sexual and reproductive health material</td>
<td>1.3a - Ability to identify 3 pregnancy prevention methods and 2 resources for obtaining birth control aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td>1.3am - Number of pregnancy prevention methods given; Number of birth control resources given aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.3b - Ability to report 3 types of sexually transmitted infections and 3 prevention methods aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td>1.3bm - Number of STIs identified; Number of STI prevention methods identified aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Increased overall school attendance</td>
<td>1.4a - Improved scholar school attendance</td>
<td>1.4am - Days of school absence by student average or percentage Term Reporting</td>
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<td>2. Increase scholar’s capacity to self-advocate and develop as leaders</td>
<td>2.1 Increased confidence</td>
<td>2.1a - Self-reported verbal advocacy, group participation and leadership aggregate or percentage CC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1b - Demonstrated leadership in group facilitation</td>
<td>2.1bm - Total number of discussions and presentations led aggregate or percentage Facilitator Log/Assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2 Increased mentoring ability and behaviors</td>
<td>2.2a - Ability to advise peers of positive and healthy decisions aggregate or percentage CC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2b - Demonstrated peer mentoring behaviors</td>
<td>2.2bm - Frequency of mentoring activity to peers aggregate or percentage Facilitator Log/Assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3 Increased ability to self-advocate</td>
<td>2.3a - Increased frequency of self-advocacy behaviors aggregate or percentage CC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3b - Increased ability to apply critical thinking and problem solving aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td>2.3bm - Frequency of self-reported problem solving for self and other aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<td>2.5 Increased understanding of gender equity</td>
<td>2.5a - Accurate understanding of gender equity determinants aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td>2.5am - Accuracy of gender equity knowledge aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.5b - Ability to identify 3 rights of women aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td>2.5bm - Number of women’s rights provided aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Improve post-secondary transitions</td>
<td>3.1 Increase knowledge of post secondary entrance and career requirements</td>
<td>3.1a - Ability to identify majority of academic requirements for MSC degrees; post secondary options aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.1b - Ability to identify 3 post secondary locations aggregate or percentage PP</td>
<td>3.1bm - Number of correct Post Secondary schools/locations identified aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Improved post-secondary planning</td>
<td>3.2a - Ability to provide 5 realistic career opportunities as determined by self reported academic standing aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.3 Increased knowledge of small business start-up process</td>
<td>3.3a - Ability to correctly define small business terms and process steps aggregate or percentage PP</td>
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### Qualitative Analysis Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Narrative responses regarding changes in ability to self-advocate and challenges of marriage proposal situations</th>
<th>Focus Groups - scholar group form 2</th>
<th>Transcribed notes/ themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Understand the level of difficulty in refusing early marriage and scholars’ ability to self-advocate in this specific situation</td>
<td>Focus Groups - scholar group form 2</td>
<td>Transcribed notes/ themes</td>
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<td>4.2 Understand scholars’ perceived ability to change and influence the directions of their lives</td>
<td>Focus Groups - scholar group form 1</td>
<td>Transcribed notes/ themes</td>
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<td>4.4 Understand scholars’ self-perceptions as agents of change in their peer groups and communities</td>
<td>Focus Groups - scholar group form 1</td>
<td>Transcribed notes/ themes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**PP** = Pre-Post Test Assessment  
**CC** = Chat Check-In Monitoring  
**AC** = Academic Reporting Item  
**PT** = Program Tracking by AGE staff