



The Strong Side™

#FightForward Against Gender-based Violence

More info

www.thestrongside.team

A Program by

International Association
of ESD Professionals
www.esdprofessionals.org

The Strong Side™

The Problem

The increase in violence on matchdays is a widely recognized issue, yet it still lacks a sustainable solution capable of driving meaningful cultural change. Studies have documented spikes of up to 46% in domestic and sexual violence against women during gamedays. While many clubs acknowledge the problem publicly, none have implemented comprehensive, lasting solutions designed specifically to protect and empower their fans and local communities.



31%

Estimated Average Global Rise in Gender-based Gameday Violence

A 15–16% average extra violence on U.S. game days across all sports

Even with conservative estimates, a typical big game adds roughly one-sixth more gender-based violence cases than an ordinary day—and in high-stakes or upset scenarios the surge can double or triple.

In England, domestic abuse incidents have soared by 38% when the national soccer team loses a major match.

That's not a minor uptick—it's a flood of danger unleashed by a single game's outcome. If one bad result can trigger this spike, imagine the unchecked threat across an entire season or tournament.

In Brazil's national league, threats or injuries to women rose by around 25% on local match days.

Soccer fervor in one of the sport's most passionate countries comes with a hidden cost: real harm in homes. The intensity that fuels the 'beautiful game' can boil over dangerously.

Every major sporting event puts local communities on high alert: experts brace for a surge in GBV incidents.

It's not just the police or shelters that need to act. Sports organizations, sponsors, and fan groups can no longer ignore this pattern. The opportunity—and responsibility—is clear: we must turn crowd passion into a force for safety, not harm.

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Executive Summary



The Solution

In partnership with football clubs around the world, the International Association of ESD Professionals (IAESDP) presents a global initiative to transform the experience of female fans and community members through a full-time Empowerment Self Defense (ESD) Training program promoting safety and inclusivity for all fans.

The Program

ESD is a trauma-informed, evidence-based method that empowers individuals of all ages and abilities to prevent and respond to violence. Through The Strong Side, the IAESDP and its local partners aim to embed this approach into football culture—where many female fans still face unsafe environments in and around stadiums.

This 1 to 2-year Pilot Program invites clubs to lead the way in promoting fan safety, community engagement, and empowerment through:



Education

Branded ESD classes from professional instructors for female fans and community members.



Workplace Safety

Workshops and empowerment programs for athletes, coaches, staff, security personnel, journalists.



Mobile App

A custom mobile app provides at-home lessons and boosts engagement.



Club Engagement

Club-branded merchandise and events, ESD digital resources for marketing, and recruitment

The Business

Investment tiers are based on the number of certified ESD instructors provided, enabling clubs to scale their impact from local communities to global influence.

Business benefits include increased ticket and merchandise sales, brand loyalty, enhanced digital engagement, and exclusive sponsorship opportunities.

This is a game-changing opportunity to bring more female fans to the strong side—where they feel safer, more empowered, and deeply connected to the club they love. The time is now. The movement is growing.

Customization Options

Training Team Options	Mobile App Options
4 Instructors	Branded White-box
6 Instructors	Full Custom
10 Instructors	

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Fact Sheet



Project Development Date: January 2025

Project Launch Date: January 2026

Countries of Operation: US, UK, Brazil, Canada, Spain, France, Australia/Oceania.

Digital Platform: MyPwrApp Micro-App for interactive ESD lessons and stadium safety info.

Key Collaborators

International:

International Association of ESD Professionals

MyPwr App

Chameleon Collective

Johns Hopkins University BSPH

Australia & Oceania:

Wisdom for Women

Canada:

ESD Canada

Latin America:

ESD Brazil

U.K. & Europe:

ESD Europe

United States:

East/ Central: ASSERT Empowerment

West/ Mountain: We Are Safer Together



Chameleon
Collective





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The Features



The Kick-off

The Kick-off

Large-Scale ESD Events: Season Opener and Closer, gather female and family fans for a massive in-stadium Violence Prevention training event.



The Strong Side Alternate Jersey

The Strong Side Alternate Jersey Week

Large-Scale ESD Events: In conjunction with all participating clubs around the world; All participating clubs & fans wear their alternate on at least one gameday the first week of March to commemorate International Women's Day March 8th. If possible, jerseys are worn on March 8th. Additional ESD workshops are offered during this time.



Pitch Queens VIP Events

Pitch Queens VIP Events

ESD Training Prerequisite: Participants must attend at least one ESD 4-hr workshop or on-going course to qualify for special VIP game access.

Safe Transport: Partnerships with rideshare services offering female drivers, ensuring travel to/from matches remains secure.



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The Features



Gameday Safety Training

Gameday Safety Training

Open to Female-Identifying & Families: Encourages cross-team camaraderie by inviting home and away fans to participate, showcasing ESD's relevance in reducing violence and hooliganism.



Daily Community Outreach

Daily Community Outreach

Open to all Female-identifying community members: The Club's ESD Street Team brings training to community centers, schools, social groups, and general gathering places within the local club area at no cost to the participants on- and off- season.



Men & Boys

Men & Boys

ESD Instructors provide male-identifying specific courses designed to teach healthy communications, de-escalation techniques, alternatives to violence, gender equity shifting the culture to collaborative safety.



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The Features



Mobile App

Mobile App

MyPwrApp Integration: Fans can access ESD tips, stadium maps (locating ESD-trained Safety Officers), track gamification points, and donate to the “Pitch Forward” initiative.



Academic Research & Outcomes

Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

Survey & Data Collection using VIP events, ESD training sessions, newsletters, online surveys, and app interactions to gather participant feedback for ongoing, academic program assessment and outcomes reporting.





International

& Program-wide Inquiries:

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Empowerment Self Defense Explained



Empowerment Self-Defense (ESD) is emerging as a go-to framework for tackling rising incidents of gender-based violence, bullying, and harassment worldwide.

Driving the Movement

Organizations like the International Association of ESD Professionals (IAESDP) aim to #FightForward by equipping individuals—especially women and children—with life-saving physical skills and the confidence to set boundaries and advocate for their own safety.

- ✓ ESD programs blend assertiveness training, trauma-informed care, and community activism with practical self-defense tactics.
- ✓ Grassroots movements, supported by nonprofits and global campaigns like #FightForward, are pressuring institutions to adopt ESD principles in schools, workplaces, and public policy.

What does it mean

★ Beyond Physical Defense: ESD reframes “self-defense” to encompass mental and emotional preparedness, building on personal autonomy and self-worth.

★ Community Building: Training fosters solidarity: groups learning together often become grassroots catalysts for wider cultural shifts against gender-based violence.



Verbal Strategies

It emphasizes boundary-setting language, de-escalation tactics, and bystander intervention skills, ensuring people can speak up before violence escalates.



Psychological Readiness

ESD training addresses fear responses in threatening situations, offering ways to reclaim power and reduce vulnerability.



Inclusive Approach

Programs adapt for survivors of violence, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, and other marginalized groups—so no one is left behind.



Physical Techniques

ESD focuses on simple techniques accessible to all body types—strikes, kicks, and releases from common assault grips.



The Bottom Line



Empowerment Self-Defense goes far beyond physical maneuvers. It’s a global movement—rooted in inclusivity, trauma-informed methods, and real-world problem-solving—to ensure everyone can #FightForward for their safety and dignity.



Advocates of the methodology assert that the **more communities embrace ESD, the fewer opportunities perpetrators have** to exploit fear or stigma.



The #FightForward campaign is building a series of international ESD conferences, expanded instructor certifications, and heightened media coverage.



ESD instructors worldwide are **collaborating with renowned research institutions** to **show measurable outcomes** like increased self-esteem, reduced assault rates, and stronger community ties.

“It is time to be proactive. The days of fighting back are over. We must #FightForward to effect change. ESD is the blueprint for that collective stand.”

Lisette Brassac Fitzgerald,
Executive Director of the IAESDP.

A broader view

Policy Link: Some governments and policymakers are beginning to see ESD as a public health approach, integrating it into school curriculums and community centers.

Corporate Buy-In: CSR-minded companies sponsor ESD workshops, recognizing the importance of staff well-being and social impact.



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Meet the team

International Association of ESD Professionals



The International Association of ESD Professionals (IAESDP) exists to elevate the ESD industry, expand its reach, engage communities, and support ESD instructors, instructors, researchers, writers, advocates, and other violence-prevention professionals who adhere to the principles of ESD. Their core values of safety, dignity, and empowerment guide them in their commitment to cultivating inclusion, diversity, and accessibility in the self-defense industry.

Based in the United States, the association serves ESD Professionals worldwide, providing career services, business services, credentialing and accreditation, and ethical standards for practice.

The Strong Side is a project designed by the IAESDP to educate the public about the benefits of empowerment training to the community and its importance in violence prevention.

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Meet the team



Wisdom for Women Australia



Wisdom for Women is a leading provider of holistic ESD training across the Asia-Pacific region.

Founded by a certified wing chun instructor, conflict resolution specialist, and internationally recognized ESD expert, Wisdom for Women blends physical self-defense techniques with psychological empowerment, neuroscience-backed strategies, and personal development methodologies—all aimed at making lasting impact in personal safety, empowerment, and violence prevention education.



Antonella Spatolla
Founder



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Meet the team

ESD Brasil

Brazil



ESD Brasil is dedicated to pioneering security solutions that further their mission of social justice and gender equality.

They develop impactful security training programs that underscore the importance of social responsibility, raise the benchmark in the industry, and foster secure environments and equitable opportunities.



Pamela Mussi Valdes
Brazil CEO

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ESD Canada Canada

ESD Canada is dedicated to equipping individuals and communities with the tools and confidence to prevent and respond to violence through self-defense training, workshops, and advocacy programs.

They foster a culture of safety, empowerment, and respect by promoting violence prevention strategies that challenge harmful societal norms.

Through their initiatives, programs, and workshops, ESD Canada aims to create safer spaces for all by empowering people to take an active role in their own safety and well-being.



JB Ramos



Laura Armstrong

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Meet the team



ESD Europe

Europe



ESD Europe is a network of professionals dedicated to spreading ESD across Europe and beyond.

They focus on supporting and training instructors, developing programs, and integrating ESD into schools, organizations, and communities.

Their goal is to foster collaboration and partnership, enabling instructors to continue their learning journey and contribute to effective ESD violence prevention programs.



Gentiana Susaj
Europe CEO



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Meet the team



We Are Safer Together USA

We Are Safer Together facilitates adaptive, inclusive, and trauma-informed self-defense, emergency preparedness, and safety-focused trainings and keynote talks.

At our core, we believe safety is a team effort. Our tailored programs provide essential safety training to individuals, families, organizations, and communities, ensuring that everyone has the tools they need to stay safe and prepared.

They are non-prescriptive, holistic, empowering, and for every BODY.



Krista Hanley



Kayla Berry

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ASSERT Empowerment Self Defense USA



ASSERT Empowerment Self Defense is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to ending Gender-, Race-, Sexual-, and Ethnic-based violence and discrimination, amplifying minority voices into positions of influence, and boosting gender, racial, and ethnic inclusive representation in arenas in which their perspectives are crucial yet seldom heard or considered necessary, all through gender-inclusive, culturally relevant Empowerment Self Defense (ESD) Education for all.

ASSERT is a network of community-based Empowerment Self-Defense (ESD) instructors serving marginalized and underserved communities. It creates job opportunities in ESD, offers continuing education for instructors, and fosters platforms where community members can be recognized as experts in their safety, security, and advancement.



James Cat Fitzgerald
Co-Founder,
Chief Training Officer

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Meet the team



Pave Prevention

USA

PAVE Prevention helps companies, employees, and communities to prevent, respond to, and heal from violent events. They aim to create spaces where people can bring their whole selves, to empower people to perform to their full potential, to stop the domino effect of violence, and to foster stronger human relations.



Arlene Limas
CEO Pave Prevention

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SEE change

Johns Hopkins University BSPH

The Self-Empowerment and Equity for Change (SEE Change), funded in part by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is an initiative that conducts international gender-informed research, evidence-based training, and support services that help entrepreneurs and employees build positive mental habits, realize their leadership potential, and achieve their personal and professional goals.

SEE Change is housed in the Department of International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.



Dr. Anita Shankar

SEE Change Executive Director



Paul Spurzem

Program Director, Lead Trainer

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Meet the team



MyPwr App

MyPwr App is a platform built for holistic self-defense training that's deeply rooted in ESD principles. With a strong focus on prevention, resilience, and community support, this scalable, all-in-one platform is making self-defense training more accessible, engaging, and applicable to real-life scenarios.



Kochava Ayoun
CEO

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Meet the team



Chameleon Collective

The Chameleon Collective provides transformation experts who immerse and embed into an organization, bringing leadership and execution skills that energize change from within. They blend in, so we can stand out.

These seasoned professionals bring robust expertise in branding, marketing, and growth strategy, with proven track records across industries, including sports, digital growth, and non-profit development.

Our initial team starts with only the experts needed to successfully launch this program, with a deep roster of other specialists who can join in to fuel scaling.



Tavis Salazar

Partner | Creative Director



Rachael Henriques

Project & Ops Manager

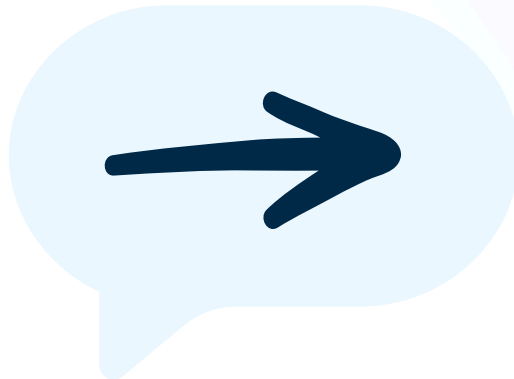


Brian Beise

B2B Copywriter



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WE'RE
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**#FIGHT
FORWARD**

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