

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SPORTSWEAR



FASHION & BEAUTY

Designing headscarves that can be worn for sports and play, Nike and Capsters are offering Muslim girls and women a practical alternative to the traditional hijab. Created by young Dutch designer Cindy van den Bremen, [Capsters](#) are sleek head coverings made from comfortable, stretchy fabrics, and come in a variety of styles to match different activities and sports looks: aerobic, outdoor, skate and tennis. Covering a woman's head and neck as stipulated by Islamic or cultural tradition, they make it possible for women to participate in sports and physical activities without having to worry about their headscarves shifting. Van den Bremen came up with the idea after learning that many Muslim girls were skipping gym classes because there wasn't a viable alternative to hijabs, which were deemed unsafe for sports activities. Capsters are priced from EUR 20-25, and are sold through the company's [website](#). A similar initiative in a different environment, [Nike](#) teamed up with the UN's refugee agency ([UNHCR](#)) to develop sports attire for Somalian women in large refugee camps in Kenya. Nike worked with the women to design outfits that would let them play volleyball, while adhering to the cultural norm of covering up. Donating enough fabric for several hundred uniforms, Nike also taught a number of girls to make the outfits from locally produced fabrics. (Related article: [P&G helping Kenyan schoolgirls](#).) When Capsters' designer first showed her design to major sportswear labels, they expressed interest but told her the concept didn't fit their brands. A missed opportunity, and one that Nike – combining social entrepreneurship with product development – seems to be attempting to correct. As the emancipation of young Muslim women grows, sports and other clothing brands will be able to tap into entire new markets. Hey, it's a big and diverse world out there!

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Website: www.capsters.com