

Turning Plastic Bottle Caps into Wheelchairs

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Plastic is one of the most difficult wastes that humans produce as it takes hundreds of years to decompose in nature. Taking a look at our daily shopping cart, we will realize that many of our necessities come in plastic bottles. Plastic bottles of mineral water, milk, oil, fruit juice, and many other foods play a huge role in destroying our environment. In the meantime, the caps of the bottles, which have a different chemical composition than the bottles themselves, decompose slower and are more environmentally destructive.

One of the best environmental and social solutions that have become popular in Iran in the past few years, is called "Hastamet". This initiative consists of collecting bottle caps, selling them to recycling facilities for new product production and buying wheelchairs from the earnings. The public is encouraged to dispose of their bottle caps. Large piggy bank booths are placed in public places such as restaurants, company canteens, gas offices, commercial companies, stadiums, hospitals and so forth, to make it easily accessible to drop off their caps. (Nikan Charity)



Photo by [John Cameron](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Where did the initiative start?

The collection of bottle caps to buy a wheelchair started in 2013. The initiator of the

"Hastamet" campaign (bottle cap collection campaign) was a girl from Tabriz named Sapiedah Jalali. During her trip to Turkey, she got acquainted with a similar campaign and started it for the first time in Tabriz. The first activity of the "hastamet" campaign resulted in the purchase of 6 wheelchairs for the disabled. Gradually, this campaign spread throughout Iran. Currently, most people and citizens are members of this campaign. In fact, the "hastamet" campaign is a social foundation (Nikan Charity).

Why the bottle cap?

Like many others, you may have the question why would only the cap of the bottle be used instead of collecting a whole bottle for recycling and buying a wheelchair?

It seems that the caps are small and a lot of time would be spent on collecting enough material. However, one of the reasons that made such a design possible was the size of bottle caps, because they can be easily collected without having to allocate a lot of space.

But apart from the size, there is a more important point, and that is the material of this bottle cap. These caps are pure, high-quality plastic, and after recycling, they are used to make office and even commercial equipment.

On the other hand, the material of the body of the bottles is polyethylene terephthalate, and the label around them often polyvinyl chloride. But the bottle cap is made of polyethylene. Each of the materials mentioned has a different melting temperature. Since two melting points cannot be predicted in a recycling machine, if they are put together in the melting machine, the machine will have problems. In fact, plastic caps and plastic bottles can both be recycled, but due to different melting temperatures, they cannot be recycled together. (Nikan Charity)



National Cancer Institute on Unsplash

The effect of bottle cap collection campaigns

Collecting bottle caps and recycling them to buy a wheelchair is a task with multiple benefits.

Protecting nature: Everyone knows of the benefits of plastic recycling for the environment. Earlier it was also mentioned that bottle cap recycling is beneficial to the ecosystem. Additionally, by reducing waste and returning plastic, we can reduce the amount of plastic waste in our landfills, and reusing plastic materials such as bottle caps will eliminate the need to produce virgin materials.

Helping the needy: There are many elderly people and patients who need wheelchairs but cannot afford it. The help of charities such as the Nikan Charity Foundation, which buys wheelchairs for such people by selling bottle caps, is very effective in improving the lives of these people.

Responsibility of citizens: Doing good deeds and spreading them can increase the sense of responsibility in people. Even collecting bottle caps, although it seems like a simple task, brings a sense of empathy and responsibility. (Nikan Charity)

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References:

Nikan Charity. "Bottle cap collecting" Nikan Mammot Charity, www.nikancharity.org/collect-bottle-caps

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