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### Cuban Literacy Method Helps 70,000 Panamanians

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More than 70,000 people have learned to read and write in Panama, in Spanish language and original dialects, since the introduction in 2007 of the Cuban program 'Yo si puedo' (Yes, I Can).

Cuban Education Minister, Ena Elsa Velazquez, told Prensa Latina during a working visit to this capital that the application of this system to the Panamanian nation is a result of the work agreement they carry out along with the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES).

She explained that on her first trip to Panama, she met with the then Social Development Minister, Alcibiades Vasquez, with the objective of strengthening this literacy program, which has so far benefited about 10 million people in 30 countries worldwide.

The Cuban minister also met with her peer, Marcela Paredes, with which she discussed some issues of interest related to the special education and the application of the 'Yo si puedo seguir' (Yes, I Can Continue), a method that allows continuing the studies to the people in the literacy program to reach primary school level.

This experience was applied with very good results in Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, the last three nations are currently free of illiteracy, she noted.

Velazquez recalled that the 'Yo si puedo seguir' program includes subjects such as History, Spanish Language, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, which allows people to reach the primary level in two years.

She added that during her meeting with Paredes, she talked about other aspects related to the technical-professional education, especially the experience the island has been applying for many years in trade schools.

Velazquez said that for the coming September 18, her Panamanian counterpart is expected to visit the island to complete some of the projects analyzed during the meeting last Monday, as well as to know the schools where

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these and other experiences are applied.

Literacy is an important contribution to world education, but Cuba has also been involved in a number of areas such as teacher training and quality assessment and scholarships to study in that island, Velazquez commented.

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