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Cuban Creator of 'Yes I Can' Literacy Program Dies

19/01/2015



Leonela Relys, the writer and teacher who created the internationally renowned literacy program “Yes I Can,” died from cancer Saturday in Havana.

“Yes I Can” is a program for adults, and it has been used on radio, television, and in the classroom. The method starts with known figures, like numbers, and is based on acquired experience. The method involves three key stages: drilling, learning to read and write, and consolidation. It can help people become literate in one to three months.

Over 8 million people in the world learned how to read and speak via her innovative method through solidarity programs promoted by the Cuban Revolution.

Relys was later appointed the general coordinator of the program in both Haiti and in Venezuela, but she also contributed to its implementation in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic, Guinea Bissau and Colombia.

Thanks to her work, UNESCO awarded Cuba the Honorable Mention King Seijong literacy prize. Relys published over 20 books on education.

She was buried Sunday in Havana.