
Panama re-launches stalled Cuban literacy programme

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Panama is re-launching its national literacy programme based on the Cuban method known as Yes, I Can, after a five-year freeze under the government of Ricardo Martinelli.

Social development minister Alcibiades Vazquez said that the programme was inaugurated seven years ago, but it faded out over the past five years to the point that Panama has not been yet declared free of illiteracy.

Vazquez said that UNESCO declares a country free of illiteracy when it reports an illiteracy rate below 5.0 percent, but Panama still is at 5.5 percent.

Former minister Mides Guillermo has been held accountable for the standstill of the literacy programme after he was said to have acted contrary to the development ministry's interests and he is now under investigation for personal enrichment, PL news agency reported.

The programme was paralyzed in July, lacking funds for implementation, despite the fact that on its inauguration it counted on a one million dollar budget.

Only 800 residents have benefitted from the programme over the past six months, thanks to the efforts of a small number of Cuban experts who have continued to implement the strategy.

Vazquez said that they expect to reactivate the program this year on a \$700,000 budget to start with that will benefit 3,000 citizens.

