



FunLab by **Theme Institute** was developed by **Dr. Dilrini De Silva, PhD** (Scientist/ Bioinformatician/ Director) in an effort to engage school children with a real-world hands-on approach to learning science using fun activities.

FunLab is a series of workshops designed for school children who have a general interest in science, want to know what it is like to work in a lab or are curious about a career in science. The workshops can be designed to suit a range of age groups from as young as 9 years old up to A/Levels.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education & the Provincial Authorities (North Western & Southern), the first edition of FunLab took place at Maliyadeva Adarsha Maha Vidyalaya, Kurunegala on 9 October 2017. Thirty students from Grade 8 representing five schools in Kurunegala (Maliyadeva Adarsha Maha Vidyalaya, Maliyadeva College, Maliyadeva Girls' College, St. Anne's College and Holy Family Convent Kurunegala) learned about common laboratory techniques such as DNA extraction and pipetting techniques (including micropipettes) through some fun and simple activities. They donned their gloves and tackled the messy tasks of extracting banana DNA and building test-tube rainbows with avid interest. The level of skill and concentration exhibited by these youngsters while handling equipment they haven't used before was remarkable.

The second workshop was held at the Madampage Central College, Southern Province on 13 October 2017 with 31 students from Grade 8 representing six local schools (Madampage Central College, Dharmashoka Maha Vidyalaya, P. De S. Kularathna Vidyalaya, Devananda Maha Vidyalaya, Nindana Vidyalaya and Kalasanatissa Vidyalaya). In addition to the previously described activities, these students also got to view prepared microscope slides of human tissue using a portable cardboard smartphone microscope. It was rewarding to see the enthusiasm shown by the school teachers present that day and their eagerness to run similar activities in their respective schools upon their return. At their request, a similar training session for science teachers will be designed to provide them with a development opportunity to employ new teaching methods in the classroom.

Dilrini is a Research Associate at the University of Cambridge, UK and was supported by Viran Perera (Volunteer, Theme Institute) and Aseka Wickramarachchi (Research Assistant, Theme Institute) to make FunLab a success.