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MEDIA ALERT

To: All Media

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Subject: Masifundise Mourns the Passing of SDCEA Co-Founder, Dr Desmond D'Sa

The South African and international environmental justice community has lost a longstanding activist, Dr Desmond D'Sa, co-founder and coordinator of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA).

For decades, D'Sa challenged polluting industries and mobilised communities in South Durban to demand accountability for the impacts of industrial pollution. His work brought attention to the consequences of industrial development for the health and wellbeing of working-class communities. In 2014, he received the Goldman Environmental Prize for his role in uniting communities against the Bulbul Drive hazardous waste landfill in Durban, which closed in 2011.

D'Sa also supported small-scale fishing communities in KwaZulu-Natal in their struggle for recognition of their rights. His participation on the National Task Team to develop South Africa's Small-Scale Fisheries Policy reflected the importance of bringing fishing communities and other stakeholders into decisions affecting their livelihoods and access to marine resources, despite the challenges involved.

More recently, Masifundise and Coastal Links strengthened its engagement with SDCEA and fisherfolk in Durban around efforts to protect coastlines from the threats posed by oil and gas development. This shared work highlighted the importance of solidarity between community organisations in defending coastal livelihoods and the environments on which they depend.

Masifundise is grateful for Dr Desmond D'Sa's contribution to the struggles of coastal communities and for the knowledge and experience he shared across the civil society movement. His work leaves an important legacy for those continuing to advance environmental justice and the rights of communities whose voices are too often overlooked.

We extend our deepest condolences to his family, loved ones, the SDCEA team and all the comrades who worked alongside him.

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