Preface and acknowledgments

Social impact assessment (SIA) is a developing field of practice. However, unlike environmental impact assessment (EIA), SIA is not bound by a regulatory context which defines this practice. This is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that SIA is not limited to technical practice, but it is a curse in that it is hard to determine the boundaries to SIA. Whereas Becker defines SIA as ‘the process of identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed action which are related to individuals, organizations and social macro-systems’, Vanclay seeks to broaden this definition to ‘the process of analysing and managing the intended and unintended consequences of planned interventions on people so as to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment’. This difference in definition is typical of the debates that occur in this *International Handbook*.

The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is the home where most of the debates in this book have been nurtured. IAIA was founded in 1981 and has developed as *the* forum for discussion on impact assessment, and is the leading global authority on best practice in environmental assessment, management and policy. Its website (www.iaia.org) provides useful information and further details. We owe a considerable debt to IAIA for facilitating intellectual inspiration in the field of impact assessment.

An endeavour such as this also owes gratitude to many individuals. Most significantly, Annelies Stolp, Wieger Bakker and Alan Porter provided general guidance and a mentoring role. Fred Vanclay (Frank’s father) provided an important proof-reading role and an intelligent lay-person critique of all chapters. However, not all his recommendations were necessarily accepted, as the disciplinary expectations of authors and editors sometimes outweighed the common-sense advice of an intelligent reader! Remaining errors and oddities are therefore the responsibility of the editors and authors.

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Finally, endeavours such as these tend to take longer than expected, for various reasons. We are especially grateful to our contributors who adhered to our sometimes unrealistic deadlines, and we apologize for the delays that

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