

ON A KNOCKOUT NIGHT WITH WIFE FARYAL BOXING CHAMP AMIR KHAN REVEALS HOW BECOMING A FATHER INSPIRED HIS FIGHT FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN



Amir and Faryal at the launch of the Amir Khan Foundation. The charity will be a family affair – Amir's mother Falak (right, with Amir) was also at the event. The boxer signs a painting of him in action (inset top) that was auctioned to raise funds for their first project

It's not by chance that boxing champion Amir Khan and his wife Faryal Makhdoom launched their new charitable foundation just three months after becoming parents for the first time, to their beautiful daughter Lamaisah.

The young couple launched the Amir Khan Foundation at the Hilton Manchester Deansgate hotel last week, with the event helping to raise funds for its first project: building an orphanage in Gambia. In this exclusive interview, Amir tells **HELLO!** how becoming a father has made him even more passionate about helping children less fortunate than his own.

"It has, 100 per cent," he says. "We went to Gambia to see how we could help and it was heartbreaking. I held a little girl who was the same age as my daughter. She was crying because she was so hungry. I thought if my daughter was in that position, it would hurt me so much. I can't imagine what her parents are going through. I can't see other kids her age going through so much pain and suffering.

"That gave me the extra drive to do more charity work. And this is probably a tougher fight than being in a boxing ring, because it's very hard to see people suffer."

The two-time world light welterweight champion and Olympic and Commonwealth medallist says that he's become not only more emotional since Lamaisah was born, but is also more driven to win in the boxing ring.

"I love my daughter to bits and becoming a father has made me much more emotional," he says. "A lot of people say being more emotional can have a negative effect on your fighting, because you have to be a tough, rugged guy. But I think it's made me tougher, because now I'm fighting for my daughter. I'm doing it all for her now – and for my other kids, as I think we'd like two or three. I'm doing everything for her and, in the back of my mind, I know I need to win this fight to give my daughter an easy life.

"I don't want to spoil her and give her everything, though," he adds. "I want her to be disciplined and respect life and earn money herself, so she can help others. I don't want her to be different



'I can't see kids my daughter's age going through so much pain and suffering'

to other kids, for people to think of her as Amir Khan's daughter – I want her to be a normal girl. If she doesn't even know her dad was a world champion boxer, that's fine with me."

So will Amir teach his daughter to box one day?

"I might teach her to punch and move, but I'd never allow her to get hit," he says. "I'll let her beat me up instead!"

FAMILY MAN

Amir, 27, and Faryal, 23, got married in a huge celebration at the Waldorf Astoria in New York last year, before returning to the UK for another ceremony attended by more than 4,000 guests in Amir's hometown of Bolton.

Faryal's mother came over from her family home in New York to help when Lamaisah was born. The couple reveal that their daughter has quickly become the focus of the whole family.

"Things have changed," explains Faryal. "Lamaisah is our number one priority now. I sometimes feel I give too much time to her, and forget about everything else."

"Before Lamaisah was born, I was the priority," laughs Amir. "I'd wake up in the morning and breakfast would be made!"

"I was number one too, and now I'm not," smiles Faryal. "So we'd better get used to it."

"Even my parents and my in-laws forget about us, and go straight to our daughter," says Amir. "We don't matter to them any more!"

"We need to start going on dates again, though. It's been hard with the baby – even when we have days off, we're both tired. But I'm going back to training camp soon, so I'm going to spend as much time as I can now with Faryal and take her out while her mum is still here."

Amir was there at the birth of his daughter. "It makes you respect your wife more when she gives birth to your baby," he says. "That's why I want her to have some time to relax, to be able to go away with her friends and get back to feeling healthy again."

"Everyone said Amir wouldn't get through the birth, but he was really strong," says Faryal. "He even cut the umbilical cord. He did everything a father should do."

Family is everything to Amir. Around his table at the event are his parents, Faryal's mother, his aunt, siblings and friends – and he says he'd like his charity to become a family affair, too.

His aim is to provide support for disadvantaged young people in the UK as well as worldwide – whether it's a local football club needing a



On a recent trip to an orphanage in Gambia, Amir meets youngsters (above) who touch his heart – but there's no provision for many children. "It's heartbreaking," he says. His trip inspired him to launch the Amir Khan Foundation to help disadvantaged young people. Its first project will be to build a new orphanage in Gambia

new kit, or a community abroad hit by a major crisis. During the evening, they raised more than the £200,000 needed to build the orphanage in Gambia. And according to Amir, this is only the start.

"This is a new chapter in my life, and next time I go on a trip, I'm going to take Faryal and both our mothers, because I want this charity to be a strong family thing," says Amir. "They can meet other women, learn from

them, discover more about what other people go through around the world, and how fortunate we are.

"I'd like to build more orphanages and just make a difference to people's lives by helping them. I love to work hard and be pushed, and this is a real challenge for me, just like my boxing training.

"We shouldn't take things for granted. Anything can happen in life, and I'm very lucky to be in a position

where I can help others. I believe that when you help people, God rewards you. It's time to use my name to start getting more people involved in helping my foundation."

INTERVIEW: RACHEL CORCORAN
PHOTOS: HS PHOTOGRAPHY/
ANIL SAKARIA & INDI HANS

Follow @AKFoundation on Twitter for news on the Amir Khan Foundation. To donate, visit pennysappeal.org/AmirKhanFoundation.

Amir was present for the birth of his daughter Lamaisah (below left, with Dad) three months ago. "Amir did everything a father should do," says Faryal (below right, with Amir and their gorgeous girl)



ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: EROTHEME, XPOSURE PHOTOS