



## Jolie, Pitt Aid Youngest Katrina Victims

By CHEVEL JOHNSON  
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NEW ORLEANS (AP) -- Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt used their star power Saturday to help The Children's Health Fund focus attention on the more than 46,000 children still displaced 2 1/2 years after hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed their homes.

Jolie said her work as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees prompted her to get involved with the CHF's effort.

"This is the largest displacement of children in my own country so I want to learn as much as possible," she said at a news conference.

A report issued earlier this month by the CHF found that 46,000 to 64,000 children affected by the hurricanes were still at risk for a host of medical, mental health and educational problems complicated by a lack of support services.

"Many families are distressed about how long and difficult the recovery has been," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, president of the CHF and director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, which conducted the study.

"We're concerned that this issue has fallen off the radar screen and that, nationally, people are losing interest, saying this is a 'local' issue. We dispute that. This is a national problem and one that requires an intense and focused effort to fix," Redlener said.

Redlener said it was "unacceptable" that more than two years families were still living in federally issued travel trailers or other temporary locations. "This is an American challenge that should have been met a long time ago but hasn't."

Jolie said that in her travels she has seen many children who feel defeated.

The difference here, she said, is that children "are feisty, fun and full of pride. They know where they're going and what they're going to do. It's that kind of spirit that will help everyone get through this."

Pitt and Jolie have made New Orleans their home since the hurricanes and have been working to help the area recover.

"We're focused on community building," Pitt said. "It's not just about homes. It's not just about building. It's about the lack of focus on education and health care too."

Pitt has pledged more than \$5 million to Make it Right, a project to rebuild 150 homes in the Katrina-devastated Lower 9th Ward, one of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods.

Redlener said his group and the Regional Consortium for Children in the Gulf, a coalition of several groups, have devised a "prescription for what must happen now," with proposals including:

- Urging the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop a process that ensures that every relocated family goes into appropriate housing in safe neighborhoods with access to schools, community based sources of social support and health care.

- Urging federal and local officials to ensure access to onsite health care and mental health services for families still living in temporary housing.

- Creating relocation options for families who want to leave the Gulf Coast and move to other communities.

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