



**EmpowerHer**

Empower Women Entrepreneurs

# CASE STUDY



Case study: Mama Lee  
Country: Austria



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Mama Lee's story begins in Ghana, where she already had her own business, working as a hair dresser. Moving to Austria did not stop her entrepreneurial spirit, instead, it was an opportunity to expand it. She wanted to continue her business and opened a hair salon, but soon realised that there was even more that she could do: "I noticed that in Austria, there were hardly any products from my culture", she remembers. This observation sparked the idea to import a variety of African goods and make them accessible to people who, like her, wanted a taste of their home. From shea butter (that she uses for her customer's hair styles) to traditional foods and hair care products, her shop now offers a diverse range of items from Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Egypt and other African countries, even other parts of the world. Mama Lee imports goods from

many different countries as her customers have different needs and come from diverse cultures. Of course, she also continues to offer her hair salon services, specialising on African her and traditional African hair styles.

### Challenges and Cooperation

The path to establishing her own business in Austria was, however, full of challenges. Navigating Austrian bureaucracy, mastering a foreign language and understanding local regulations required a lot of effort. "At the beginning it was really difficult", she admits. "I had to learn everything from the beginning: registration, taxes, bureaucracy, organisation and also the language." The financial burden is also significant, with the costs of running her shop and her own household at the same time. Yet, she never gave up and is driven by the

### Success in Emigration:

#### The story of Mama Lee

#### Bridging cultures: The story of a Ghanaian Entrepreneur in Austria

Coming from Ghana, Mama Lee arrived in Austria 30 years ago, following her husband, and soon decided to open her own shop. Her mission was to bring a piece of her native country and other regions in Africa to her new home, as she saw that there was a need for products and materials from Africa.

Today, her shop is a beautiful example of cultural connection and entrepreneurship shaped by cultural background and local opportunity.



understanding that her work fills a gap in the local market.



Her customers are as diverse as the products that she offers: people from Africa, the Caribbean, and different regions of Europe alike visit her shop, seeking not only goods, but many times also a sense of belonging. “Many miss their traditional food and cultural products”, she explains. For the customers, Mama Lee’s shop is more than a business – it is a bridge to their own heritage and an opportunity to maintain cultural experiences from their home countries.

Support from an Austrian friend was crucial in the early days, helping her navigate the complexities of a new country. This experience underlines the importance of community and collaboration, values she now passes on to others. “You cannot do

everything alone”, she emphasises.

### Cultural Heritage

Her expertise as a specialist in Afro hair care is a skill she learned growing up in Ghana and now shares with clients from many different backgrounds.

“Afro hair is very special and must be treated differently than European hair”, she notes. Her knowledge in this field, passed down through generations, is part of her family legacy, with her children and grandchildren continuing the tradition and already having a good understanding of it as well.



### Vision for the Future

Looking ahead into the future, she hopes to keep her business thriving and to involve her family

more. “It is important to me that knowledge and work are passed on within the family” she says.

Her story is a reminder of how migration and entrepreneurship can enrich societies, creating spaces where cultures meet and communities connect, thereby offering an enriching experience for everyone.

*If you would like to learn more about Mama Lee and her products you can find her [Instagram @mamaleeafrosalon](https://www.instagram.com/mamaleeafrosalon).*